Venus with Dirty Feet

The Autobiography of
Mrs. William Marion Reedy

A transcription of original documents in the archives of the State Historical Society of Missouri - St. Louis Research Center

Edited by:

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Preface

William Marion Reedy was a towering literary figure in early twentieth-century American letters. As owner and editor of *Reedy's Mirror*, a St. Louis–based weekly, he exerted influence far beyond the Mississippi Valley through incisive commentary on politics, war, art, and society. Witty, often cynical, and consistently perceptive, Reedy's essays were widely read, and highly influential but his most enduring legacy lay in his ability to recognize and champion emerging talent. Among those he supported were Sara Teasdale, Edgar Lee Masters, and Carl Sandburg—writers who would go on to shape American literature. When Reedy died suddenly in 1920, he was mourned by friends and by a wide circle of artists who remembered him as a generous and discerning advocate for others' work

For nearly seventy-five years, however, the story of his widow has remained largely unknown. Presented here are the autobiographical writings of Margaret Helen Chambers, who identified herself primarily as *Mrs. William Marion Reedy*. These materials were discovered in the *Margaret Reedy Papers* (C3436), held by the State Historical Society of Missouri – St. Louis Research Center. Though the collection is dated 1917–1949, the autobiographical notes themselves appear to have been composed between 1936 and 1949, based on research and internal evidence.

Margaret Reedy's writings offer a rare, firsthand account of a woman whose life unfolded largely outside the literary spotlight that surrounded her husband. Her reflections document the experiences of an uneducated woman navigating poverty, work, marriage, widowhood, and survival in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to their intrinsic value as a personal narrative, these writings provide a complementary perspective on William Marion Reedy, revealing aspects of his private life and domestic world that are largely absent from public accounts.

The surviving materials reflect multiple, unfinished attempts by Mrs. Reedy to write both an autobiography and a biography of her husband. Over a period of years, she sought assistance from professional writers, though none of these projects reached completion. As a result, the collection consists of duplicated pages, gaps in chronology, variant spellings of names, and a fragmented assemblage of handwritten and typewritten notes.

To present these materials in a coherent and usable form, a number of editorial decisions were made. Where individuals appeared under multiple names or spellings, standardized usage was employed for clarity. Material clearly outside the scope of Mrs. Reedy's personal narrative —most notably writings authored by William Marion Reedy—has been excluded. Grammar and punctuation have been corrected only when necessary for readability; dialect and idiosyncratic usage have been preserved. Chapter headings and a table of contents have been added to aid navigation, and brief editorial notes appear where additional context may be helpful to readers.

This volume is intended as a researcher-created transcription and arrangement of public-domain archival materials. Every effort has been made to remain faithful to Mrs. Reedy's voice and intent while rendering her work accessible to historians, literary scholars, and others interested in women's lives, St. Louis history, and the cultural world surrounding *Reedy's Mirror*. It is hoped that this edition will make her long-obscured story available for study and that it does so in a manner she herself would have found respectful.

M. Trost, St. Louis
2026

I admire her force, her determination, her all-around ability more and more. And then she is so simple and trustful in other phases, and so much like a kid, I can't help loving her more and more.

She's the best ever was.

—William Marion Reedy, 1915

Image of Mrs. William Marion Reedy:

St. Louis Globe-Democrat, December 27, 1949, p.1, cols.6-7, image copy, newspapers.com

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Margaret's Introduction

Margaret's exact birthdate and birthplace are unknown. A 1940 Census listed her as 66 years old making her birth year 1874. However, the St. Louis Post- Dispatch reported that she was 85 years old when she died in 1949 making her birth year 1865. In Calvary Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri, where she is buried, her headstone gives the birthdate as February 21, 1879. Burial records state she was born in Ontario Canada.

In the beginning of these memories, which is a recital of weal and woe, I shall try to tell paradoxical phrases on my life, elaborating upon them from time to time as the details unfold in this factual narrative.

I spent one year in the convent, where the tarring in such institutions were given to me, and, I must confess, before middle age I was the proprietor of a (brothel).

In passing, it shall be told that I was seduced by a wealthy New Yorker when, at the age of sixteen, I fell desperately in love with him - a man whose name, I did not know until years later. Impossible? No, I did not disclose my secret at the time. When I did learn his name, I was shocked, for he was a multi-millionaire and is still alive today as I write these lines. He was the son of one of the most wildly and eccentric figures in American financial history of a generation ago. The seduction, having occurred more than half a century ago, I cannot prove it legally– if I sought to do so. Therefore, this rich man and my home village shall remain nameless in this true story of my life.

In some instances, particularly when reciting events of my childhood, I have used fictitious names. This was done to save my living relatives, if any, and early associates or their descendants from embarrassment. Strange to relate, some years after opening the brothel, I became the wife of one of America's foremost editors and commentators on social, political and literary matters. He was the confidant of at least three Presidents of the United States and of several Cabinet members, a man know internationally in the literary world, one who owned the weekly magazine he edited and in which he published the first production of several writers now celebrated throughout the nation. More than twenty years after the death of this literary genius, I am writing this story of my life, confident that certain phases of it seldom, if ever, have been duplicated anywhere, While this narrative is written as a record of my own life, it contains many

incidents pertaining to the career of my late husband. Therefore, in a measure, my autobiography also is a biography of him.

Margaret's Childhood

Earliest Recollections

My earliest recollection is of my Aunt Virginia and Nora, my nurse, who is washing my face using soap profusely. I kick and scream. My Aunt Virgie rushes into the room asking with a bit of alarm, "What on earth is the matter?"

"My mouf's full o' soap," I said.

"Silence, close it!" she laughs.

"Nivver, nivver did oi see th' bate o' it," the maid chimes in."Tis terrible what oi have to contend with. Yae air forivver playing in th' mud, always dirrty; ye air a bad–bad child."

"Oh Nora, you didn't say that to Mr. O'Toole," said Aunt Virgie.

"You said I your bestest!", I said.

"What do you mane by that?", said Nora.

"She means your heart", up roared my Auntie.

"Faith, oi sid that? Will oi can till ye, eavesdroppers sildom hera gud o' thimselves" said Nora.

Among the medley of my memories is one of Nora sowing seeds. I am pulling her apron strings. She carries me out of the garden and fastens the gate, but this does not deter me. I drag a chair to the fence, use it in climbing to the top of the gate, then dive from my pinnacle into the garden. My Aunt rushes out, picks me up and warns, "If you ever do that again, I'll whip you!" but I am not alarmed by the threat, for never had she chastised me, nor do I recall that in after years she ever punished me severely more than a few times.

Praying for Pennies

Other recollections are of the little church which I would attend with Aunt Virgie and Nora, and of my Aunt reciting the Lord's Prayer at my bedtime when I would lisp it after her, kiss her good night and Nora would tuck me in bed. Auntie taught me the Ten Commandments with the usual threat of a whipping if I should break one of them. This lesson was followed with the recital of the importance of unselfishness and right living in every way, emphasis being placed on her statement that "God's is the religion of justice, kindness and goodness."

"Does eversing in the while world belong to Dod, Auntie?" I asked one night as she tucked the bedcovers about me.

"Yes, that's right. Now go to sleep. Good night."

I pulled the covers over my head and fashioned a prayer of my own. It was something like this: "O, Dod, please drop down enough pennies for me to buy that doll at Jim Duddle's store. Drop them, please, in the patch o' ground I've marked off for my garden with pebbles." (MINE: Vernon, British Columbia)

Next morning when I was on my knees, eyes almost touching the soil of my projected garden, Nora copied me and asked: "Faith, what air ye doin' on yer knees stretchin' loike a sarpint? Do ye be afther losing' innything? How minny pinnies did ye lose?"

"I never lost any pennies," was my resentful reply.

"Thin what air ye doin' crawlin' roun' in th' dirrt?", she said.

"Lookin' for sumpin."

"Sure, ye jist said ye didn't be afther losin' innything. Indade, do ye ixpict innything to fall from th' skies?

"Yes, I do," I said with a gulp and a tingling sensation in my spine.

"Tell me, just what did ye expeck from on high?"

"Pennie–and a lot ov 'em, too."

"Glory be to God, but that cheild is a pist! Nivver di oi hear tell o' sich a thing."

Nora's perplexity did not shatter my dreams. I kept on digging into the dirt for I had visions of finding a wealth of pennies. My energies were interrupted by the maid's prosaic command:

"Come here, and oi will apply slithers o' soap and a scrubbin' brush to ye."

My aunt, who had heard us talking, suddenly emerged from the house asking, "Did you take any money out of my purse?"

"Oh no, Auntie, I never took any money out ov oo purse."

"Yet you expected to find money you did not hide or lose in the garden?"

"I – I taut somebody was going to froe pennies in the garden for me–a lot uv 'emm, too."

"Tut, tut! This is the most extraordinary thing I've ever heard. Just look at your face and hands! Why, there's dirt even in your hair. You must have crawled all over the garden in your quest for wealth." Aunt Virgie looked at me affectionately with a half hidden smile while Nora stood giggling in the doorway.

"Just who did you expect to drop or throw pennies in the garden for you, and where is he?"

"I – I can't show you, 'cause, cause He a ain't here."

"Who's not here?"

"Dod."

"Oh! So you expected God to throw pennies in the garden for you?"

"Yes, Auntie, oo said Dod owned eversing in the wide world. So I asked him to froe 'nough pennies down for me to buy that doll at Jim Duddle's store."

"What a colorful fabric you weave around yourself!"

Then there is my remembrance of one Christmas in my childhood. I had collected a lot of fancy boxes.

"These are my Christmas presents, Nora," I said proudly.

"Yis, and 'tis a saycrit place ye have to hide thim pinnies and plinty o' boxes ye have. Is me Christmas prisint in wan o' thim?"

"No, I didn't have 'nough money to buy too a present, Nora," I told her, but I did. And won't she be surprised when she sees it in the morning. "Look at this one, Nora; it's for my Auntie."

"Faith, what is it?"

"A roguery!"

"A what?"

"A string of beads with the pitcher of Dod on the cross. Look!"

"Oh, that's a foine wan. Tis a pathernoster, me dear. That's a rosary with a prayer on ivery elivinth bead."

There is a dim recollection of my aunt sitting beside a jardiniere of flowers, her graceful head bent over her knitting, her hair sprinkled with gray. How I loved to hear the soft rustle of her dress when I sat on her knee and she told me a story, sometimes with tears in her eyes. She would say, "May the New Year bring happiness to all who make and keep good resolutions." Then I would kiss her good night and Nora would put me to bed. But I did not sleep. I sneaked into the room where my stocking hung, hoping to see Santa Claus. Nora shooed me back to bed three times.

I was up at daylight to see what my stocking contained. I was delighted to find that my presents included the doll from Jim Duddle's store, dressed in white and sitting on a tiny rocking horse. Nora, who was peeking through the portieres, led me to the kennel at the rear of the house. There, the greatest surprise of all was awaiting me. The maid told me to look toward the house. as I turned my gaze back after obeying, I saw her drop something out of her apron. It vanished into the dog house. She led me to the kennel door. I could scarcely could believe my eyes! A

puppy, fat as a jelly roll, was wagging his tail. With exclamations of delight, I grabbed the puppy and race to my aunt.

"Oh, Auntie!" I cried. "Look at the fine present Santa left me."

There were other expressions of joy before I asked her, "What kind of dog is he?"

"A thoroughbred Pomeranian. Now what are you going to call him? Pompey?" said my aunt and Pompey it became.

Killing, Lying, Stealing

One day, I killed three little birds. My aunt caught me and she was horrified.

“Why, oh, why do you do such ghastly things!”

“They did not have any clothes on.”

“Feathers you mean, is that why you killed them?”

“I didn't kill them, Pompey did.”

“But you took them out of their nest and gave them to Pompey. Oh, what shall I do with you– you put me past my patience! A voice from Heaven tells me I must not betray a trust. I must protect you, but how can I when you do such despicable tricks!” Her voice broke as she turned and walked away.

That trick was bad enough. My next adventure was worse. Errors the best of us make in childhood – how the memory of them comes back with poignancy! The very walls seem to whisper the errors. I stood smacking my lips, my face smeared with candy.

“Come here to me,” said my aunt. I approached her guiltily, still clutching remnants of candy. She asked me where I had gotten the confection.

“Oh, it's so good. Won’t you have some?” I said evading her question.

“But where did you get it?” she persisted. “You must have gotten a lot of it judging by the streaks on your hands and face– even in your hair.”

I squirmed but managed to say, “Oh, the grocery man gave it to me. I, er, er—-” I stopped, for the lie frightened me. But I regained courage in a measure and went on: “It’s fine candy. Pompey just loves it, but I saved some for you and Nora.”

Aunt Virgie was not convinced. She quizzed me further:

“You got the candy at the grocery– is that what you mean? You took it?” I admitted she was right. My aunt continued, “Don't you know that is stealing? Horrors! I can scarcely believe my eyes; I always have trusted you, but I'll never trust you again. Shame on you! I'm going to whip you!”

And this time she did with me– with the back of her hand.

“Now, take that candy back to the grocer.”

“I can't, Auntie. Cas half of it's in me.”

“Well, take the other half back and I'll pay for the half that's in you.”

That taught me a lesson. Never again did I take anything that did not belong to me.

The Pony

One morning, Nora pointed out the window. There, I beheld a pony hitched to a post. I ran and told my aunt of my delight. She said she had rented the pony for me and I was to ride it for two hours every morning. Aunt Virgie refused to let Pompey sit in the saddle with me, as I suggested. She frequently accompanied me as I rode the pony. She was an accomplished equestrienne. During the many delightful rides I later made alone, children in the neighborhood often were rude to me. For some reason, they never mentioned either my mother's or my father's name except in a mysterious way. I became so daring in my feet on horseback that Aunt Virgie protested.

“Don't try to jump a fence again”, she warned me. “You might break a limb. And you mustn't call your pony a mare. It’s vulgar and unladylike.”

“That's what the livery stable man calls my pony,: I replied unabashed. “It's a lady horse and such a horse is called a mare.”

“That's no reason why you should so speak of your pony,” insisted my aunt, who was a veritable victorian. “And I heard you call the pony a beast when you were talking to Nora.That's not ladylike.”

The Wounded Puppy

About this time, my aunt took up my education seriously. She herself became my tutor and many were the interesting stories she told me about Biblical characters and places, about modern history, the wonders of nature and many, many other things. Sometimes, before my lessons began, I would arise early, romp with Pompey or rob Nora of her favorite flowers and carry them to Mrs. O'Toole, a neighbor. On one of my canters, Pompey led me into some bushes we're lay a tiny puppy. I procured a blanket, put the whimpering little animal in a basket and was carrying it tenderly home when I met my aunt. She was much concerned. She noted that the little creature had been shot for it was bleeding. Auntie lifted it from the basket into an improvised hammock made by gathering her skirts.Reaching our house, she drew her shawl from her shoulders and made a bed on the floor for the puppy.

"How can anyone be so heartless as to wound a helpless little dog!" my aunt exclaimed as she moistened the puppies lips with milk and made its head more comfortable. The little dog feebly wagged its tail and showed gratitude through bleary eyes. "Look dear, how thankful the poor thing is," auntie continued. "Never, never, my child, should you abuse so faithful and trusting an animal as someone has wronged this puppy. I wonder if the veterinarian could save it …no, it's too late. The little one is dying."

I joined my aunt in tears.

Aunt Virgie Makes A Promise

Aunt Virgie's sorrow over the little dog's death was mingled with worry about the absence of Nora who, for the first time in my memory, had gone away without telling Auntie of her departure. Hours later, Nora returned wearing a slate colored dress which had belonged to her mistress but now was made over for her. The sleeves were tight down to the elbows where they flared into white lace that cascaded over her hands. Beneath her starched skirt were a bustle and hoops. From her shoulders hung ribbons over a fringed and looped Polonaise which, from waist to knees, bulged behind. A brooch bedecked with a cameo carving of my aunt's profile was pinned to her breast. There was over much white stocking space between her skirt and shoes. She wore a bonnet matching the color of her dress and just beneath the head covering, little curls peeped as roguishly as Nora's blue eyes. The purse she carried was oversized and from her neck hung a long chain, at the end of which was a locket holding another likeness of Aunt Virgie. But these items of Nora's costume and accessories did not provoke the misery she manifestly was undergoing. Her woe was in consequence of wearing an outmoded pair of my aunt's shoes - footwear obviously several sizes too small for Nora's spacious feet.

"Niver, nivver, did oi have sich gri ef with me feet," she lamented, shedding the shoes in a jiffy. My aunt voiced her sympathy, then forth with demanded and explanation of the maid's prolonged absence.

"Oi bin to interview ould Doc Gradwohl," Nora replied. "Indade, Oi spint me whole day waitin' fer him. 'Tis nothin' concernin' meself–it concarns yerself."

"Why, Nora, there's nothing the matter with me."

"Mebby so an' mebby not, but 'tis manny years Oi've bin watchin' oiver ye an oi not intoirely insinsible to yer hilth." When Aunt Virgie insisted she was not ailing, Nora continued: "Tis quare th' dresses are fallin' off yer bones. Ye air failin' ivvery day loike a wilton' flower before me virry eyes. Oi bin takin' tratemint from ould Doc Gradwohl a long time. Ye should've bin doin' so yerself all the whoile. Faith, ye should see him right now and found out whut's th' mather with yure innards." Nora now was in tears, but, regaining her composure, she went on.

“Tis losin’ o’ ye that’ll break me heart. If ye refuse to see him oi’ll nivver believe me sivin sinuses agin.” With that she left the room, sobbing convulsively.

“Come back, Nora, come back,” Aunt Virgie begged, her face plainly denoting physical and mental suffering. “I promise you to see Dr. Gradwohl, even tomorrow if you think it best.”

“Glory be, mum, thin Oi’m more thin satisfied! Oi’ll till him to call tomorrow!” Smiles replacing Nora’s tears. Meanwhile, I wondered whether Nora really believed my beloved aunt was doomed.

Throughout the next day, I sat by the window mystified by Aunt Virgie's long absence. Twilight came, then darkness, but she had not yet come home. Never before had I known her to remain away so long. Rain falling in almost blinding sheets, except when lightning illuminated the sky, added to my mental discomfiture. When a blast of thunder startled Pompey, he barked in alarm and pawed at my dress. Then I soliloquized again about the fidelity and unselfishness of dogs– animals devoid of hypocrisy, incapable of harboring a grudge, heroic even unto death in protecting their masters or mistresses. Pompey growled and cringed, becoming more alarmed as the thunder boomed anew and the wind howled to the trees, bending the foliage almost to the ground. Pompey's behavior alarmed me almost as much as the menacing skies had frightened him. I put him in his soap box and leaped into my own huge four poster bed.

I recall nothing clearly until the next morning– and that recollection is of a fantastic dream. Slowly, I reconstructed the vision. I saw an eerie, hideous figure clutching the door handle, then trying to take my mother's picture from the wall. I could see my mother move her head (although I never had seen her in the flesh) roll her eyes and stare at me. In the course of that protracted gaze, she seemed to smile at times, then her eyes went back to the same expression they had in her portrait. I must have screamed in my sleep for I found myself upright in bed. The dream was resumed as drowsiness again overcame me. Then, I was in my mother's arms, her hair about my neck, my lips glued to hers. She seemed to be trying to speak to me but could not. That dream stirred my fancy in the long ago and is as vivid to me today as it was that morning when I awoke and heard my aunt's foot fall in the next room and cried out to her.

"Oh, Auntie, where did you go? The storm frightened me so, and you must have got drenched."

"No, I came back snugly. Mrs. O'Toole brought me home. I was away because of a business deal. I've sold this house and bought another one. It pains me to leave the old place - I was born here, lived in the house all of my 50 years."

Then walking sadly to a window, she peered at the familiar landscape and resumed. " I sold the old house to our advantage. With the money remaining after I've paid for the new and

smaller home, I'm going to send you to the convent. The new house being smaller, I shall be compelled to sell most of the furniture here but I shall keep my most prized possessions– my books."

"Auntie, the furniture must have been costly. Isn't most of it antique?"

"Yes, that very chair in which you sit is rosewood, and the tapestry is beautiful and rare. This table with the inlaid ivory was your mother's. You must keep it always. Those two paintings are by Jean-Baptiste Corot, a celebrated artist, the either is by Verboeckhoven, who specialized in barnyard scenes. I always admired those two oxen feeding at the rack," she said looking at me whimsically as she turned her head lest I see the tears in her eyes. "Yes, I'll send you to the convent. Now, we'll take a look at Nora's garden before we go to breakfast."

It was a magnificent summer day. Everywhere was the fragrance of Madam Recamier roses, nutmeg and lemon scented geraniums, for rain had sweetened the air. Suddenly my aunt asked:

"Did you take that cherry pie to Mrs O'Toole?"

"No, I - well, I accidentally ate it. It was good."

Aunt Virgie laughed and I snickered. When she expressed amazement at my capacity for consumption of culinary concoctions, I amended my admission by saying I had given half of the pie to Pompey.

"Well, my child, I'll forgive you— but don't let it happen again." A characteristically compassionate dismissal of my wrongdoings. "Now, come, let's find out what Nora has for breakfast."

We found Nora swaying like a pendulum as she dropped eggs into the frying pan.

"Tis airly yea ir, mum. Ye say ye hearrd a tricklin' sound afore ye say ye came in? I put in a wee drop o' that cookin' sherry in me stomach as oi sprinkled yure grapefruit with it," weeping in her apron as she added, "but it didn't relave me headache."

"Take another, Nora. Tell me, what are you crying about?" asked my aunt.

"Tis th' ould house ye're sellin'--where yore anceisters have lived wan hundred years or more, as have yore great-grandfither and all youre ither forefithers, And them mornin' glories oi plinted and thrained to cover th' ould fence, that's more thin a century ould."

“Never mind, we’ll find another spot for a garden. Don’t be cross, Nora. I should have a consulted you, I'll admit, before selling the old place, for you've been with the family so many years. Take a whole glass full of that sherry. You’ll find another bottle of it in the pantry.”

That placated Nora, who told us breakfast was ready, and we set to a table ornamented with some of the faithful maid’s choicest blossoms. In the days which followed, I noted that Aunt Virgie and Nora were not happy in our new home, although they pretended to be. They were busy preparing to send me away to the convent. My wealth of new clothes were being packed. Pompey carried his little tin cup and leash to my trunk as though he knew I was about to depart and expected to accompany me.

The day I went away, my aunt admonished me to always speak the truth, confess a falsehood if I should tell one and, when kissing me, she said in parting, “Mind your teachers, study hard, be a good girl and I'll send for you to come home for Christmas.” I must confess I manifested no enthusiasm about my lessons but my deportment probably was that of the average people at the convent.

Losing Aunt Virgie

When I came home for the holidays, I scarcely could recognize Aunt Virgie. She was so thin. Nora had accompanied to the railway station to welcome me. Pompey was there, too, of course, barking with glee. Nora was as hail and jovial as usual but her good nature was in startling contrast with the ebbing health and mien of my aunt. Before my holiday season was ended, a nurse was engaged to care for my Aunt Virgie despite protest from Nora.

When I did not return to the convent at the end of my vacation, my aunt was sorely worried. I told her I did not wish to go back and, as a matter of fact, I never returned to school again. I realize my decision to remain in my native village changed the whole course of my life - the moral aspect of it vitally. Had I returned to the convent, I would not have met the New York heir to millions, the middle-aged man who seduced me. When a few more recollections of my girlhood have been penned, the story of that atrocious betrayal will be told fully.

The new nurse, tall, lean, large mouth but thin-lipped, within an hour after her arrival at our home laid down the law to Nora in virtually these words, "I'm Bonnie Bonick, 35 years old, unmarried and still a virgin, have had two marriage proposals. Ten years of experience qualify me as a nurse. I am in absolute charge of this household so long as the patient lives. By the way, has the lady any life insurance? If not, then her niece should attend to the matter at once, for her aunt is gravely ill. And now, Nora, take all those rugs, magazines and flowers from her room at once."

Nora drew herself up proudly, threw back her head, stamped her feet, with her arms akimbo, demanded in a stentorian voice:

"Naither rugs nair innything ilse ivver comes out o' th' room unless she consints, miss!"

Miss Bonick and the maid exchanged bitter vocal broadsides which ceased only when Nora grabbed a broom, brandished it menacingly, jerked open the front door and shouted:

"Git out, ye ould throllop, afore oi throw ye out!"

Miss Bonick obliged– in a hurry. Alarmed, I asked Nora how would she explain the newly engaged nurses sudden departure.

"Oh, Oi don't want to till her th' truth nur till her a lie, so Oi'll jist say she wint away."

An explanation by the faithful servant was unnecessary. As we entered the sick room, Aunt Virgie said.

We tiptoed out of the room, and now Nora sits with her mouth wide open staring at the ceiling.

"Nora, what's a secret?"

"A sacyaet is whut wan whoman whispers to another, and that wan whispers to the nixt and the nixt wan"

Nora was born in the old house we just moved from.

"What thet ould house what is a hundred years ould."

"How do you know it is one hundred years old?"

"Be the ould sthone mullins an the broken sthone sthepts and the worm eaten lattices. The ould house was protected from the war O wind be the trees that was a thousand years ould. It was a foine ould house in its day and always full oo, company. Miny a part they had, set the blood adancing, after their fill o champagne, they liked their rubber - the sthable was full o, horses and carriages, . Your Grandfather was a bironet. O' a very eliginent family - - but an ould dkivil with the gout and notorious for his attintione to wan ould trollop after anither, loike all min, I niver trusted ainy o' them," she snapped.

It had been so warm all day and now the room seemed chilly and the moon became dim. Through the network of clouds, suddenly a flash of lightning and a crash of thunder. The trees begin to sway and bend to the ground, blew the taper out. Oh, how gloomy the room seemed– so dreary and silent. I was struck with terror and awe.

"Faith, wan could hear a pin drop," said Nora as she struck a match, lit the taper and held it high over her head, tears dropping from her deep blue eyes.

"Nora, why do you cry?"

"Oi am not crying."

"Oh yes you are. I saw tears on your cheeks just now."

"Faith, that's sweat."

Sad as I was, I had to laugh. But who would not laugh at Nora with her Irish funny little characteristics. Poor Nora. All the love she ever knew was given to me and she idealized my aunt.

"Hush, I think I hear her." Nora's ears were as sharp as her tongue.

We hastened to my aunt's room. She was dead.

Nora crying out, "If she had let ould Dr. Gradwohl perform the operation, she would be aloive to day."

Margaret and Nora

We are sitting in the graveyard watching the flowers nodding and blooming, a little bird hops from one tombstone to another. Engraved on them Mother, Father, Brother, Sister. All sleeping in this peaceful sylvan place. There was not a flutter in the ancient trees whose branches hung to the ground as though to protect one from the sun.

"Even the air seems different here don't it, Nora?"

"Yis - yis, where's me hoe? Oh, here it is. O'll grub around the rest o' me flowers while you run and get me some heather. Be easy as she taught you. Niver, Niver will there be anither loike her. Now there. Tis a foine blanket o' flowers she has to civer her," she said tapping the gravestone with her hoe smiling sadly. "My, my, our season is short. We perish loike the flowers. Another tap, and this is the end. There - there, don't be sitting on the tombstone. Tis no place to be sitting."

"Say Nora, do you know what I am thinking about"

"Faith o' not claraivont and tis a deal better we don't know each other's thoughts. Some payple have good thoughts, some have bad thoughts and some of them ould trollops have wichet thoughts. Now tell me what ye air thinking about."

"I am wondering what Pompey did with the sandwiches he did not eat."

"What, do you mean to tell me Pompey eat those foine sandwiches. Faith, he is worse than yourself - - always hungry. Come let us go home. I have such a pain in me back. When we get home o'll send for ould Dr. Gradwohl."

As we walked along, we met an old lady with a shawl thrown over her head.

"I just planted a few daisies and violets on his grave," she sobbed. "He was wounded ina factory, owned by rich men. He wasn't taken care of properly, gangrene set in his wounds, we did not have the money to perform the operation, he died."

"Who," asked Nora.

"My name is Smithers, Mrs. John Smithers."

"Ay, I knew him years ago, and a foine man he was."

That was the only time I ever head Nora speak well of any man. When we told her of my aunt, she said,

"I knew her well. How she loved you my child. May you never suffer as I have," she said falling on her knees, praying under God's majestic trees.

The following Sunday, Nora and I went to church and I must help her dress.

"Now, you pull the sthrings while I hang on to the foot o' me bed – pull harder."

I gave them a jerk.

"Sthop, I ave a stuer'in in me stomach. Something is wrong with me innards."

"You are always nibbling, Nora."

"Only fish nibble," she snapped. "Take the handle o' the dure and ye pull. Harder, pull harder."

I did, the string snapped and Nora fell in the middle of the floor.

"Tis luck I am I did not break me nack," she laughed looking at herself in the long glass. "I'll fix thim meself." She fastened the strings to the nail and walked forward. "Now there I have them on back properly."

It was a beautiful Sabbath day. The streets were crowded with people in their Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes. Suddenly, a breeze caught Nora's skirts and wrapped them around her legs.

"Did me drawers show?"

"No, Nora."

"Well, what air thim min laughing at. Bad luck to them niver wan o' thim had good sence."

"Look Nora, there's Mary Brace."

"Yis I see her." She bends a courtesy to Mary, who is now walking with us

Her arm pressed in mine, and now we are on the church steps, shaking hands with Mrs. O'Toole

"My My, but young one's look foine, and rich - rich in youth, and beauty too, —How could we know, the sorrow, beauty and youth would bring to us in the future.

In the midst of voices the church bell echoes through the air. And now we are walking down the aisle. Everybody bows and bends to Mary. She is so popular. There is no event of any

importance without Mary and besides she plays the organ, and now she is playing the doxology. Praise God from all blessing flow, and her voice rings clear and sweet above them all.

It is Easter morning, and I am dressed in muslin and blue ribbons.

"Will I do Nora?"

"Do?" She said standing with her arms akimbo, taking a liberal survey. "Yes, your hair is so pretty with that blue ribbon. I don't know that I iver saw you look bether. Now, turn around and o'll pull the bows of your sash. Run you and Pompey for a walk."

I skipped down the street, right into the livery stable and while I was talking to the boys, I forgot all about my little puppy. I looked around and they are stood my Pompey in the middle of the road. I stood horrified, calling him, for there was a team of horses attached to an elegant carriage flying up the hill. I screamed but in vain. A sudden stop and there lay my Pompey in a welter of blood. Rushing to him, I threw myself down in the dirt beside him.

“He is dead!” I screamed.

Suddenly, I felt someone touch my shoulder and a man's voice saying “No - no. He is not dead. I am sorry, I didn’t..”

I did not let him finish the sentence.

“Don’t touch me you brute! You've killed my Pompey.”

“Your dog is not dead, I tell you. He is stunned and has a bad cut on his flank. I was trying my team out while my coachman was getting shaved. I cannot tell you how I regret this incident. Let me take your dog to a veterinarian.”

But this offer I spurned. Taking off my undergarment to improvise a swing for my Pompey, I disclosed a red petticoat made from one of my aunt's old skirts and adorned with homemade lace. The undergarment provoked laughter and besides, the white muslin dress was filthy and gone was the beautiful blue sash.

“You must let me take you to the veterinarian if you want to save your dog.”

My obduracy overcome, I climbed into his carriage and the coachman sped with all haste to veterinarian Vance, who said, “Your dog is not fatally injured but, must remain here for a few days.”

I told him I did not have any money.

My escort said, “Don’t worry about that,” pulling a roll out of his pocket that would choke a horse. “I'll pay for all services. I sincerely hope you'll forgive me. It was an accident.”

Then I looked directly at him for the first time. He did appear as though he was sorry and oh, how handsome he was. When we got outside, he said, “Would you need a little bit to eat after all this confusion- say a bite of pate de fois?”

“Oh no, thank you sir. I never drank it.”

“But you don't drink it - you eat it.

“What is it?”

“It is goose liver. They nail the web of the goose's foot to the floor and stuff it with food that enlarges its liver.”

“Well, that sounds like cruelty to me. I don't care for any. Goodbye,” and I ran away home.”

“When I got home, I asked Nora, do you miss anything?”

“Yis I do. Where's Pompey?”

“All cut up.”

“Faith, who butchered him?”

“Oh Nora, are you making fun of me,” I said and then I told her what happened and who would make amends for the bill - the gentleman. “Oh Nora! He had money in every pocket and he is coming to see us!”

“What’s his name?”

“Here’s his card.”

“Shur’in the divill himself couldn’t read that.”

“You are holding it upside down.”

“ I don’t want to read it anyway. There.” She threw it in the stove. “And niver will I allow him through the portal o’ the dure.”

“That’s him!” and I opened the door myself.

“Nora, this is the gentleman who was so kind to Pompey.”

“Koind to Pompey when he tried to kill the poor little fellow!”

In the meantime, I asked the man to sit down. I was not ashamed of the furniture, even if it was old-fashioned. There was the horse-haired sofa and chairs, the quaint bookcase and the old silk portieres, all suggestive of a glory that had been, and luxurious still to me.

“I never regretted anything so much in my life,” he said and stopped as though waiting for Nora to speak - but she didn’t. He then continued in a sonorous voice, “I love dogs and I would not hurt a dog. Indeed, I have dogs of my own. In fact, I don’t own them, they own me.

They are so smart. They know when one likes them. They have a mental capacity. Their acute sense of smell, hearing. taste. touch. And they are alert to any violation of their rights and injury or injustice. Their fidelity is almost divine, so genuine and true, when anything happens to the one they love, they're distressed. Mute dumb suffering is so pronounced, if they could but talk they would rank higher than a human being," he smiled it Nora. "I would rather suffer myself then cause a dog to suffer."

Drawing herself up proudly and in words mixed with some she had acquired from my aunt, she snorted. "O'i am not impressed be your high-toned sintiminents atall. T'is no favorable impression ye air making on me sir."

He smiled again and said, "Indeed, I admire you for your truthfulness."

"Faith, I would prefer respict rather than admiration even in delinquent invisible craythures - no plus ultra."

"What do those words mean, Nora?" I asked thinking to change the tread of the conversation.

"Your Aunt's words - a monument to wit," she said. "Big not to interrupt me. Tis bad manners," Turning to the gentleman, she said, "I have always had me misgivings about the min. They kiss their wives goodbye and thin to places they go. Some places has no number on the door atall. And some o' thim have a brass knocker on the dure wan could hear for a mile."

The gentleman defended his sex in a lengthy reply to Nora's accusations and then he walked over to Nora and said, "Come let me take you and your daughter for a drive this beautiful day.?

"What! Go driving with a stranger? Niver, and she is not me daughter either. O'am her ould nurse and plenty o' trouble she causes me with her bad language."

"Oh Nora, you are always scolding me, damnit!" And I walked out of the room. When I came back he was gone.

"Oh Nora! Why did he leave so quickly?"

"Faith, Oi tould him I thought it was coming unto rain, the wind blowing, and the ould papers is flying about the hull nayburhood. Ye better go home."

"Dammit! Did you say that to him?

“Yes, O’ did. He niver took his eyes off ye all the time he was here. I was happy when he took himself to his carriage. O’ watched his coat-taile flying, and the wind blowing through his dyed whiskers. Begorrah, what a foine suit he had on!”

“Oh, you noticed his clothes, did you? And did you notice how handsome he was.”

“O’ didn’t for he is only half a man - the other half o’ him a a divill.”

“Oh Nora, I thought he was grand! I just love to hear him talk. But why did you tell him I swear?”

“Ye air always a swearing. O’ did not think you cared.”

“Damn right I care. The boys at the livery stable swear. I laugh at them. They are nice boys and would go to H–L for me. But I did not want him to know I swear.”

“Well. O’ll admit he’s good looking, and I suppose he is rich too. Thim kind air careless o’ decency. Yis he is the very divill. Will you promise niver to spake to that man again?”

I gave my pledge never to speak to the gentleman again but my heart was broken when Nora extracted that promise. I sat on the bench in the yard for an hour thinking of the man who had been so kind to me and my Pompey. It seemed to me that I was born to be fond of men, and now, as I look back over the years I can recall that I liked nearly all the men and boys I ever knew. I was fond of the boys at the village delivery stable. Though they were rough and taught me much I should not have known, and they certainly did not belong to the socially elite, but those boys were kindly and their ways became my ways, I knew no masculine standard, with rare exceptions, during my childhood.

Slumber was impossible until by means of weeping long after I retired, for the pledge I had given to Nora made me restless. If I should meet that handsome man, how could I pass him and not speak to him? I won’t, that's all. Then to add to my troubles, the next day, when I went to see my Pompey, the veterinarian said the external wound had broken out afresh and internal inflammation had developed. But I was assured my little puppy would recover and I ran home to Nora.

“Oh, Nora. There is inflammation in Pompey’s wound!”

“Niver heard of dogs having information.”

“Inflammation,” I said, “Dogs have the same troubles that effect human beings the doctor told me. But he said it was not serious and I may take him home in a few days.”

“Mebbe so. But ye walked to the hospital today. ‘O told you to have ‘O Toole take ye. When you bring Pompey home, you must come with O’Toole!”

But I did not go with O’ Toole. “Instead, I ran to the veterinarians.

Lo and behold, who should be there standing at the door but the gallant stranger himself. Oh, how handsome he was I told myself anew as he surveyed me critically. Now in my older years, and in view of subsequent sorrows, I know he was evaluating my girlish form with lustful desires.

“I’ve been to see your pet several times and when I learned he was to leave the hospital today. I sped here to take you home in my carriage. How’s Nora?” He smiled so kindly, I forgot the sorrows of my young life. Obviously, he observed how carefully I picked up my Pompey.

“You love dogs don't you?”

“Yes sir and so does Nora.”

“We will take your little dog way out to the country for a drive. Do you want to go?”

“Oh sir, I would just love to go!”

The ride with the handsome gentleman molded my future. Every incident of that day is still vivid in my mind. It was a gorgeous morning in Spring. The trees were leafing, the rivulets were swollen by seasonal rains, the air was fragrant, the sky azure. With Pompey in my lap, I sat enthralled in the carriage. There was something stern, almost sardonic, in the handsome features of my escort, yet he fascinated me. He was the only man or boy to whom I ever had spoken except the fellows at the delivery stable, O'Toole and the veterinarian. But young as I was, I already knew I was falling desperately in love with my companion, even though at times he frightened me with his carnal hints. Remembering Nora's teachings, I ignored some of his questions. when his talk took a new tack, he abruptly asked:

“Have you had a classical education?”

“I don't know anything about classics, but I know everything about dogs and I'm a wizard at cussing, I'm told. but Nora generally totes me out of the room by the ear if I swear when we have company.”

He talked about the sky, the fields and forests and what not; told me how, after a rainstorm, the fields were dotted with dandelions and weeds, the products of seeds blown by the winds. He looks searchingly in my eyes and said:

"I wonder if you retain the seeds of virtue." When I remained silent he went on. "The earth, warmed by the sun, doesn't always furnish flowers. Oftentimes, it brings thistles and nettles. Among humans, a lazy day like this one evokes hatred for learning, produces weedy wit such as emanates from your boys at the livery stable, your favorite rendezvous. I know, because I put up my team there occasionally, and I know you're a perfect little vixen. Anyway, that's not a nice place for a little girl. You're a child of misfortune, perhaps due to your environment when away from home. Have those boys already led you from the path of rectitude?"

I did not answer. I sensed the meaning of the word rectitude, wondered what the boys had told him, wished I had never gone to the stable and regretted with shame my failure to heed Nora's warnings. But why should I be ashamed of those friends who are always respectful and kind to me? That was more than I could say regarding the girls of my acquaintance.

"Who told you I hung around the livery stable so much?" I asked in lieu of putting further questions to myself.

"Oh, gossip floats around like a cork in the ocean. Sometimes even trifling things give rise to the most damaging tales."

I was old enough to know about evil things. Looking him straight in the eye and wondering whether he would believe me, I declared, "If they say I do anything really sinful, they are liars!"

His reaction to that utterance was a poker face expression that disclosed nothing. Then he resumed, "When people are suspicious, they cast aspersions wholesale. For some people, defamation and calumny have no limits."

I can recall his words almost literally, although I then did not know exactly what they meant. We were whirling along in the environments of the village. I could see that Pompey wanted to get out of the carriage. The handsome gentleman told his coachman to stop.Then he carried my pet to one side of the road. In leaving the carriage, he had touched my hand. It thrilled me with an emotion I never before had experienced. My body was drenched with perspiration.

Should I throw my arms around his neck? Oh how I wished he would touch me again! He is akin to a god, I thought, and I am a nobody. As I was telling myself my love for him was increasing each minute, he turned to me as I sat huddled in the carriage and inquired:

"Do you now go to school?"

"No, I don't like school. I went one year to the convent and my aunt left me money to send me back, but when the shyster lawyers got through with her estate there was little left of it. I know something about algebra, poetry and history."

"You're delightful," he said chucking me under the chin. "What do you know about love?"

"Oh, I love to make the girls jealous. I love your horses and your beautiful carriage and I love Nora and Pompey. I imagine I feel like Cleopatra when she went to meet Mark Antony. I read about her in a book. She had many lovers but never married any of them. How Cleopatra must have fooled Mark Antony when she said the pearls melted in the vinegar! I'll bet she merely swallowed those pearls or slipped them in her stocking, for if the vinegar was strong enough to melt them, how could anybody drink the vinegar? It would burn her stomach. I'm going to be an old maid like Cleopatra, my aunt and Nora."

Then I peeped at my escort, who looked at me amorously, although at that early age I did not know the wisdom used when planning seduction.

"What else do you know?"

"I know I like you."

We stopped at a wayside inn but did not enter. When a colored man came to the carriage my companion told him, "Have half a dozen chickens cooked when we get back late today."

It was not long until suddenly we stopped in a dirty street before a house with large stone steps. My companion ran up the steps and rang the doorbell, covering his face with one hand. A stout woman peeped from the door. He said something to her and then walked to the carriage.

"Come in," he said to me, " I'll take Pompey."

I was spellbound at the splendor of the interior. My feet sank into a rich rug, a Turkish antique. The furniture was done in Venetian satin brocade, Couches were piled high with beautiful cushions. Gorgeous rosewood cabarets were festooned with tropical plants. I did not

then know the names for such elegance. My Pompey scampered on the oriental rugs and finally snuggled into the midst of one to snooze.

"Come," said the woman, "We'll go to the Rose Room."

We passed through pretentious portieres edged with dainty narcissus and forget-me-nots. The walls, ceiling– everything in the room– were rose colored. all the ornaments smacked of grandeur– to me. Works of art adorned the walls. Some of the paintings depicted nude women.

"I bring only my dearest friends in this room," our host is said.

"It's very beautiful. Reminds me of the magnificent chateaus of France where they drop a slug in a slot when using the cabinet de puissance," my escort said, laughing.

Sitting at a table at one end of the room were four women playing cards amid chit chat and much laughter. They voiced delight at seeing my escort. For me, there were only derisive snickers.

"Don't pay any attention to them," our harsh faced hostess said. In her youth, she doubtless had been pretty, but now her face was heavily seamed and haggard.

"How's business?" asked my companion.

"Just fair," she replied, and I wondered what was her means of livelihood. I surmised she kept a high-toned boarding house and those young women owed her money for lodging and meals. That's why she speaks so harshly to them, I said to myself. How nasty she was when telling one of them to wipe the surplus rouge from her cheeks. Then it was the doorbell rang, the girls hastily powdered their faces and one peeped through the portieres.

"Who is it?" rasped the stout hostess.

"Oh, it's that old sap Edward," came the whispered reply.

"Greet him, Ella. No wait a minute, your face holds too much paint."

The one addressed as Ella retorted, "I hate that man."

"You do, eh?" said the stout woman. "You should feel flattered when a man with all his money pays attention. You're getting old– keep that in mind!"

Ella did evince fading youth but her gown, with slippers to match, was a flame of color. In my eyes, she was beautiful. She and the newcomer discussed a topic incomprehensible to me. I continue to Marvel at my new surroundings. It was long after my companion and I had left the

garish place that I learned he had taken me to a bawdy house. I could not then conceive, decades later, in one of the largest cities of a neighboring nation, I myself would be conducting a similar resort for men of lustful passions.

Realizing that he had been so attentive to the women in the room as to virtually ignore me, my escort walked over and handed me a $10 bill as he kissed me. Ah, the ecstasy that caress evoked! I did not know what to do with the money. In my childish unsophistication, I thought it would be a gracious gesture to give the currency to the young woman who then so solicitously was asking me all about myself. Then it dawned upon me that Nora must be worried at my long absence from home. I whispered my fears to my escort and he said we would depart.

As we neared my home, I told my handsome escort to let me out of the carriage and I would walk the remainder of the way. As I alighted, he handed me a large package, saying, “Take this as a remembrance and promise me you'll never again go driving with a strange man. Sometime when you're older I'll see you again.”

Alas! We did meet again, but as we parted that evening it was with unhappiness for me, and not the sort of sorrow with which I left him when we did meet once more. As he drove away, I wanted to run after him. If I but had his address, I could write to him but now it was too late to ask him for it.

Losing Nora

I sat on the steps a long while, afraid to enter my home, knowing I had broken my pledge to Nora. Finally gathering my gift package in one hand and Pompey in the other, I ventured into the house. There Leonora, groaning as though in utter anguish at the site of her roving foster child, her concern was solely for me.

“Whar, oh whar, have ye bin?” she asked tremulously. “O sint down to the liverstable, but they said they hadn’t seen ye the day. I was so worried it just seemed to effect me innards. O have been ali’n for a time anyway.”

An inspiration came to me in the form of a lie. I had opened the gift package while sitting on the steps and found it held the half a dozen cooked chickens.

“I have been working in a restaurant and I brought you some delicious food!”

“Ah me darlin’, I could not eat a bite.”

She got up out of bed, put a white dress on a chair, a pair of gloves and a veil, went to bed and died.

My aunt's death was bad enough but the death of Nora was more distressing for now I had no home. I would leave the village and go God knows where.

Yes and I would find work too. But first I must say goodbye to the boys with the stench of the livery stable. So now away I went. They were sorry I was going. They would miss me– would I write to them? Would I have a parting drink with them? I did and got drunk– the first time in my life that I was drunk. I staggered up the street, lost my way, in that fine burst of country where the O'Toole's lived and the more I walked, the more the liquor bubbled boiled and hissed and the more giddy, dizzy became my head. Suddenly, I began jumping from tree to tree. Then I tried to climb them. Pompey, barking with glee, thinking that I was playing with him. I was swinging on one of the branches backwards and forwards. The branch broke and I fell down in a mud puddle. Mr O'Toole came along and his old wagon and took me home.

I wish I hadn't spent so much money on Nora for food. She didn't eat it anyway and the funeral cost so much money too. Those thoughts brought a deluge of tears. And now it is goodbye to all the happiness of my youth. My pulse beat with irregularity as I walked away with

tears in my eyes– tears of emotion– not of regret– for I was glad to get away. I was leaving the old life for a new. It did not worry me for youth, golden youth is profoundly absorbed in imaginary visions of the future. Youth knows no sorrow.

I told myself, my education had been neglected, but I'll find work, I will.

Margaret On Her Own

The Free-Love Son

Mrs. Beince was her name. She was fat, cross-eyed, long thin lips, standing with her hands pressed in her side. Ordering me around in a metallic voice. Promptness I demand! And precisely at 8:00, have my son's breakfast on the table! I pay $3 per week but not in advance, do you hear me? Now, put that dog out in the stable. You'll find your room in the attic. Go to bed.

The next morning, I was sitting trying to read the ads in the paper for I knew I would not last long, when the door opened and the son walked in my room. I was horrified for never before was there a man in my room.

“Oh my dear!” he said. “I thought I would find you under the covers. I fell in love with you the moment I saw you. But don't let Mama know. Mama is so bombastic, grandiloquent.”

“Is he making fun of his own mother?” I wondered.

“Free love is my motto but it is a…”. He got no further. Frightened at his bold and unwarranted proposal, I struck him violently in the face. He reeled, clutching my skirt. At the same moment, I fell against the dresser and gashed my cheek. The mother came rushing into the room to find both her son and myself on the floor.

“Oh, my poor boy, you are hurt! Did this hussy stab you?”

Before the young man could reply, I screamed, “I have not got a knife and I did not call him to my room either. He came in my room without knocking and made an indecent proposal!”

“I didn't force my way into her room. She called me in here,” the young man chimed in, heartened by his mother's defensive him.

“My son is a gentleman! He wouldn't wipe his feet on such as you! Stop crying! You will rouse everybody in the house!”

“Your son’s an evil-minded blaggard,” I retorted, “but he can't force me to do what I've been taught is wrong.”

“She called me in here mama!”

“Of course she did. Otherwise you would not be here. I should have known better than to hire a hussy like her. Get out and right now! You’re discharged!”

I could do nothing else even though it was midnight. With Pompey in one arm and my carpet bag in the other, once more I was trudging along the road, having been hired and fired the same night. I had gone but a few paces when I heard a voice saying:

I could do nothing else, even though it was midnight. Again, Pompey and I are trotting along the road. Suddenly a voice said, "Where to, little Miss, at this late hour? From the looks of your face you've just come away loser in a lover's fuss."

"I am looking for work," and I began to cry.

"You don't look like a bad little nurse girl," he said gazing at me with wondering eyes.

I met his gaze unsullied by an innocent stare.

"Durstmore is my name. Just coming from the club. My wife needs a nurse girl. Perhaps you'll fit the bill. Come along with me."

I followed him wondering what the next place would be like. It was worse.

"So this is what you brought home, John?" said Mrs. Durstmore, as I stood before her inspection. My hair hung below my Tam o' Shanter. My dress was half unbuttoned.

"She looks as though she sleeps in her clothes. Where did you find her John?"

"Oh, walking along."

"Perhaps she is a streetwalker."

"Perhaps you mean a floor walker," laughed John.

She looked at me as though I was rat poison. But she didn't laugh. She looked as though she never laughed in her life.

"Where did you get that dog? It is a thoroughbred, isn't it John? Where did you say you got it?"

"My aunt gave it to me for a Christmas present."

"Where does your aunt live?"

"Oh, she is dead, and so is Nora."

"Who's Nora?

"She was my old nurse."

"Humph! Plausible story that! You probably stole the dog." Then turning to her husband, she went on, "We'll learn the truth tomorrow. Meanwhile, show her to her room and put that mutt in the basement."

“Oh please! Pompey always sleeps in my room.”

John winked at me and when we got to the hall he put Pompey in my arms. The next morning in response to the ladies inquiry, I told her my name was Margaret.

“Well, I'll call you Mag, for short. Now Mag, this is the cook’s day off. You'll have to do the cooking today. Then, she listed among the foods to be cooked cornmeal muffins. I did not know how to make them so I sought to solve my dilemma by promising to pay the woman in the adjoining house to help me prepare the muffin mixture. But to my sorrow, Mrs. Durstmore found out and blew in the kitchen like a blast of wind and I went flying out the door. I was so frightened.

“You dare do a thing like that? That h#ll cat next door is my worst enemy. It is a wonder she did not put strychnine in the mixture instead of baking powder. You're discharged!”

With Pompey at my heels, I slunk out the back door. I had been fired and hired twice in two days.

The Handsome Gentleman Again

Passing through the stable into the alley, I barely missed being run over by a team of horses attached to a carriage in which set the gentleman who so recently had infatuated me. The man of my dreams, leaped from the carriage, cuddled Pompey in his arms and asked me whether I was coming or going and whence I came, wither was I going. Before I could reply, Mrs. Durstmore appeared at the carriage door demanding an explanation of my tarrying. She did not even want me in her stable, and then hot words were exchanged between the gentleman and my employer of so brief adoration. It was obvious she was jealous of him.

"No wonder you are late for your tryst with me. Here you are with this little wench! You may be interested to know, she tried to have me poisoned. And besides, I saw her kissing your coachman!"

I was about to cry a denial of intimacy with the driver when the faithless wife slapped the gentleman, then ran through the stable and into her home. Once more, except for the coach man, I was alone with a gentleman. He stood momentarily mute, then his smile lapsed into laughter.

"I'm a peregrinator," he mused. "You are a puzzling innovation. The greater the novelty, the greater the pleasure to me. Yes, I'm a peregrinator.. I've seen women and girls of all sorts. As for you, I'm reminded of a fluffy Persian cat. I'd like to pet you."

"You would, eh?" roared Mr. Durstmore dashing from the stable doorway.

Pompey, frightened, leaped from the gentleman's arms. Grasping my pet and carpet bag, I sped up the alley. Just ahead of me, I was certain I espied the modestly clad woman who conducted the house with the large stone steps and ornate interior. She was entering a carriage. Veering to overtake her, I crashed into a flabbergasted policeman who, regaining the wind I had knocked out of him, demanded an explanation.

Margaret recounts the biscuit incident to Mr. Durstmore and the handsome gentleman, now identified as Mr. Pete.

"What's the matter with them? I et some of them and thought they were delicious," said Mr. Durstmore.

"I didn't make them. I can't cook. Nora always did the cooking at home. I paid Mrs. Neezy to make these corn meal muffins for me. Your wife found it out. and it made her so mad she fired me and said it was a wonder Mrs, Neezy didn't put gunpowder in them for baking powder and prussiate for salt."

"That would be rather poignant and tickle the palate," chuckled the handsome gentleman who is full of jests and humorous quotations.

"Yes, they are very hostile toward each other. My wife accuses me of having an intrigue with Mrs. Neezy and she got in such a violent passion and poured out such a heap of accusations."

"Oh," interrupted Mr. Pete, "lovely woman." The way he said it made me think of all kinds of perfume flowers.

Mr. Durstmore didn't pay any attention to what Mr. Pete said. He went on, "And they had a quarrel about the most simple thing the other day."

"What was that?"

Mr. Durstmore said, "Diapers. Diddies. Whatever you call them. It seems my wife's laundress got our babies' diapers mixed up with those belonging to Mrs. Neezy's baby."

"Well, I'm glad it wasn't the babies that got mixed," said Mr. Pete with a sardonic smile of amusement. Then he slipped his hand in his breeches pocket and handed me a bill.

"Here. I want you to take this. And don't look until you get away way up the street," he said giving me my scanty bundles. A sly glance. "Goodbye. And good luck to you."

I blinked my eyes in the sunlight trying so hard to check the tears and said "thank you" in a voice that was almost a whisper and died away with the wind. There was something about him - a hauteur, a loftiness. And this cultured man of the world made me think again he was the President of the United.

The clouds were torn in little fragments and the sun dropped behind the horizon. Pompey and I walked away. Gradually, panic was overwhelming me for I did not know where I was going. I now had $31. For he had given me a $20 bill.

Fatally, here were paintings and statuettes of nude women, fashionable furniture, rich rugs and tapestries, Mirrors reflecting garishly gowned girls who peeped at us through plush portieres. The furniture and decorations in their ornateness surpassed even those I had seen at the house with the stone steps.

My escort (Mr. Pete) said something in an undertone to the gaily gowned woman who had greeted us at the door. She motioned to Susie, a negro maid, and she followed them. I trailed along clutching Pompey as we entered another beautiful room. Obeying my companion's order, the maid served a bottle of the choicest wine, looking at me curiously as she poured it. I was sitting sidewise on a chair, my tam o' shanter on the back of my head and pulling down the blouse I had colored with homemade red dye. Particles of the dye still remained on my face and hands although I had not noticed the spots until my escort mentioned them. His suggestion that I be more careful in applying rouge evoked laughter. My confused explanation making matters worse. I wept in lieu of anything else to do in this dilemma. He said he was sorry. He had not intended to offend but was merely teasing me.

Since I appeared tired, the gaily gowned woman would take my escort and me to our bedroom. I did not know the significance of her remark but I did feel ashamed at her parting words. Take off that blouse! Throw it away!

My next recollection is of a knock at the bedroom door. Opening it, a delivery boy almost fell into the room with bulky packages. I went back to my chair and sat gazing at the parcels, eager to open them but afraid to take off the wrappings until my companion gave his permission despite his earlier assurance the "furbelows and folderols - fresh from the looms" as he described them, belonged to me and had been delivered by his order.

Another knock at the door. This time it was the maid bringing more wine. My companion filled a glass and I drank the contents almost in one gulp. The wine's exhilarating effects offset my reluctance to open the packages.

"Drink all the wine you wish. The maid's bringing another bottle," he said as I feverishly tore away the wrappings which encased the garments.

“Oh, what's this?” I exclaimed disclosing a lacy garment and reaching for another glass of wine.

“That's your “robe de chambre”.”

“And what's that?

“Well, you perhaps, have always called such a thing a nightie. Anyway, it's fashioned for the same purpose.”

There is more wine, an over fullness of it. In the midst of our orgy, there comes to me, as rain splatters against the window panes, remembrances of the wholesome teachings of Aunt Virginia and Nora. Of their references to my distinguished forebears on one side of my family, of a moral reputation I must carry on, of… Then, as the potent but insidious effects of the fermented liquor reach their zenith, I soliloquize, “What the hell! I’ve but one life to live! What’s the difference? Who will ever know what's happening and about to happen anyway. Where would I go if I run out in the storm, jobless and alone? Why not rest snugly in the arms of the gallant gentleman– now asleep– who's been so gracious to me?

Now I have a choking sensation. My roommate is still slumbering. At last, I am draped in the robe, shaking the gentleman and demanding more wine.

“Yes, yes,” he mutters, “Get a bottle, two bottles– all you want– ring the bell.”

Such a means of summoning a servant is unknown to me. As I grope for the device, Susie enters and I ordered four bottles but she looked at my companion, who again is asleep, and returns with only two containers. Somehow, through the liquor-laden mist, I spy a slender vase on the mantle, fill the ornament to the brim and guzzle the wine within it, the vase. It twists from my trembling fingers and falls to the floor. The crash awakens my companion.

As he opens his eyes slowly, I exclaim, “Oh, I didn't mean to make such a mess! You must pardon me. I hope your mother didn't hear the racket.”

“My mother!” he rejoins with a hiccuping snicker. “That's a rich one! You've broken a perfumery vase. It's not intended for use as a goblet. You've had enough wine. Come to bed.”

He lapsed into sleep again and, after shedding the “robe de chambre”, I replaced it with gown after gown from the gift parcels, admiring my new found finery as reflected by the lengthy mirrors…

The remainder of the night is a fantasmsality, a plethora of pictures, pictures which I vainly wish could be erased from my maze of memories. I leave the new finery strewn about the chairs and on the floor, pitch my nether undergarments to the top of the chandelier from which they hang grotesquely like a scarecrow from a crossbar in a sodden field after a rainstorm.

I dance demonically. The room reels. All about, on the floor, the ceilings, the walls, the bed, there are three objects where there should be but one. I clutch a chair and slump into it just as a roll of thunder rattles everything in the house.

In the midst of a dream that this is my nuptial night, I am awakened by another peel of thunder. It also has aroused my roommate. Then comes the realization I am sitting in the chair facing him, as naked as when I entered the world. But my nap has not stemmed my inebriate propensity for laughter.

'What are you giggling about?" he asked half rising from the bed.

"My panties."

"Lack of them, you mean. Obviously they aren't where they belong ordinarily. What's the matter with them? Where are they?

I pointed to the chandelier as his eyes followed my finger, then encircled the room.

"Oh, I see those things up there near the ceiling. I thought they were newly unearthed relics from the Hanging Gardens of Babylon."

His reply denoted nothing to me. Groping again, I pressed the bell which hitherto had summoned Susie, but there was no response to the ringing - - no more wine. The stillness which followed was that of a haunted house but I did not know that the ticking clock presaged to the hour of dawn. The quietude sobering me a bit, I ransacked the room for my nightie. Finding the "robe de chamber" at the bottom of the messy mass on a chair, I staggered into it and stumbled into the bed.

I shall draw a curtain, at least a translucent veil, over the final scene in that bedroom. It was one of passionate bliss, lavish lascivious love but - - as it ever was, ever is and ever shall be - - the aftermath was a better one, for every rose is replete with rancorous thorns. I was tarnished, morally and physically. The chastity that had been mine was gone beyond recall.

Sunlight streamed through the windows which rain had drenched during the night. But the weather's pleasing aspect was not reflected to me.

Crawling from the bed, I surveyed the room. The disorderliness had been woven into a pattern of the Wreck of the Hesperus. I was wilted like the last rose of summer. As I stumbled achingly, tearfully in search of my clothes, I gazed at my image in the mirror, trying to believe my personal appearance was proper and wondering whether my companion's mother would approve of our engagement, a betrothal.

Softly, I stepped in from the hallway and closed the door. I remembered I had dropped my parcel. Then suddenly came another knock at the door. Opening it, I found the same man, who handed me the parcel. I thanked him for it.

The package contained a bottle of black Narcissus for me. He must care for me or he wouldn't send me this lovely bottle of perfume, I thought. I took a bath, saturating my dress, my hair and my drawers with the perfume and sat down waiting for him to awaken. I thought that if the Angels control men, he must have come from heaven.

I wish that Mrs. Durstmore could see me now. So jealous she was that day! I know he doesn't care for her, even if they did have secret meetings, I said to myself. The idea of a married woman having illicit affairs with another man! Isn't one man enough for her?

I wondered how much he loved me. I'll ask him when he wakes up, if he ever wakes up. But could he love me and bring me to a place like this? Perhaps he brought me here to make Mrs. Durstmore jealous. But how could she know where we were? I'm going to ask him to marry me, I said to myself with the determination. But my brain was not functioning clearly and I had a horrible taste in my mouth as an aftermath of all the wine I had drunk. I grasped the bottle of black Narcissus, gargled my mouth and nearly choked to death. I made such a noise my companion stirred and then sat up in bed.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

I muttered something.

"What did you say?"

"I nearly swallowed a pin," I lied.

"A what?"

“A toothbrush.”

“You look as if you had swallowed a dozen toothbrushes. Your face is purple.” he replied, tumbling out of bed and standing before me perfectly nude.

I turned my back and said, “How you puff and groan.”

“So well I might. I had an important engagement last night, but I broke it,” he said tossing up his head with a blast of his nose.

“Who with?” I asked.

“Young lady, don't you think you're a bit inquisitive?” he said sniffing prodigiously as he walked around the room and looked in the mirror, admiring himself.

I got up, but was still shaky, and stumbled over a taboret.

“Oh, I hurt my foot! There too much furniture in this room, anyway!”

“It’s quite evident there's not too much furniture within that head of yours. But abundant proof that you are well furnished, like the amourette with sexual attraction. Your amorous nature has twisted me into a distressing condition, if my imagination is not working overtime. How do you feel since you've lost your virtue? What are your plans, may I ask, if I'm not presuming upon our limited acquaintance?”

My “Hidden Paradise" was beginning to take a different twist and my romantic idea was about to collapse. I swallowed hard. How could I tell him I was building my future on him? How could I ask him to marry me when he talked to me like that? By this time my throat was choked and I couldn't talk.

He then said, “Ho, ho, the dress!”

“What's the matter with it?”

“You exhibit yourself like a ballet girl. But I must say you look marvelous! Radiant like a spring rose,” he said surveying me from head to foot. “You are worthy, as the auctioneer would say. Your emulous dress sits well upon you, suitable and appropriate to your presence surroundings.”

“I put on this dress to please you,” I pouted.

So ends Margaret’s tale of her “nuptial night”.

Margaret Finds A Way

After disappointing efforts to obtain work and believing that "Mr. Pete" had no intention of marrying her, Margaret turned to prostitution for survival.

First Night at the Bordello

In the ensuing lull, the landlady perfumed the place with incense for luck. When the doorbell rang, again there was a rush for rouge containers and powder rags. A large group of men poured in but with the exception of a few rounds of drinks, the visitors spent no money.

"Merely sightseers," said the landlady when they had departed, supplementing her remark with curses for what she rated a night far less profitable than usual.

In the course of the night, I noted that one of the girls, addressed as May, looked at me curiously. Her face seemed familiar and I asked, "Haven't I seen you before tonight and isn't your name May?"

"Yes, that's my name, but I changed it when I came to this house. I remember having seen you at the livery stable. That was when you lived in a world vastly different from the one both of us are in today. I was in love with Willie, one of the boys who worked at the stable, and when he married another girl I tried to kill myself. How do you happen to be in a place like this?"

"Then I told her of my experience with the wealthy gentleman, of the deaths of my aunt and Nora and of the two places where I had been hired and fired, emphasizing somewhat my experience at the Durstmore home.

"I knew your aunt died," May said, "but until now I had not heard that the old nurse also had passed on. Your aunt once gave me a book which I now have in my room. It may interest you to know that Durstmore married the woman who fired you when she was in an inmate of this very bawdy house. I did not learn of that experience in her life until I came here when the older girls told me of it. She was known to them as Ella. My brother is a reporter on the Toronto paper. I have heard that he came sometime ago to this village to get a new story on what your mother wrote in the diary. Did you ever find that diary and what did it contain?"

I told her of its contents as disclosed elsewhere in this narrative.

The landlady's dejection over the amount of the night's receipts appeared to vanish with the maid's announcement, "Mr. Tommy has arrived!" From the interest the girls took in him, I inferred he was a favored and frequent visitor. I learned that he was the son of one of the town's wealthiest men and from his conversation I knew he had traveled widely. He regaled the girls with stories of his experiences abroad and in doing so drank so much wine he fell asleep. On awakening, he frisked his pockets, appeared mystified for a moment, then reeled across the room to a mantle on which reposed a rare and costly vase. From it, he whisked bits of paper and a $100 bank note. A moment later, the vase slipped from his hand and crashed to the floor. Now somewhat sobered, Tommy explained that when he entered the parlor he had hid the big bank note as a nest egg. He escorted me to my boudoir and there I received half of the sum represented by the banknote.

Within two weeks, I was to mourn the death of my dog Pompey and experience my first arrest on the charge of being drunk in the village streets.

Bound for St. Louis

Returning from Police Court to the brothel, the maid told me Mr. Pete was waiting for me in the parlor. He said he would be in the village again in two months. Those intervening months were virtually a daily repetition of the scenes which occurred during my first night at the bordello.

When the brewer's son came back to the village, he gave me a lavish sum of money and in a few hours we were on a train bound for St. Louis which Midwestern metropolis was to be my residence from that day, more than 35 years ago, until the present hour.

The brewer learned somehow of his son's infatuation for me and sought to shatter the romance. The young heir already had declared his intention to marry me, but on a morning when his father called at my apartment, his son and I had quarreled bitterly. When the fashionably garbed brewer entered the apartment, he bowed decorously, shook my hand and was about to speak when I plumped myself into his lap. He gently pushed me over to another chair.

"Perhaps you misunderstand the purpose of my call," he said gravely. "I am Pete's father. I came to…"

"Oh, yes," I interposed, "You look so much like him. I knew you were his father the moment you entered the door.

He smiled as his eyes appraised me. I knew I had blundered. Then he said bluntly, "Do you love my son Pete? If so, I think we can arrange matters satisfactorily."

That here was a golden opportunity for blackmail on a large scale did not occur to me; . My reaction was to respond, "No, I hate him!"

Half an hour later, Pete burst into the apartment, exclaiming, "Oh, Marches, my queen! My father says you do not love me! Tell me that what he says isn't so!"

I reassured Pete I did love him, lying now having become an essential tool of my trade. But that meeting virtually was the end of my close association with the brewer's son. It was not long until his father sent him to the Klondike country and upon his return to St. Louis that our paths were to cross several times.

Starting a Business

The year of my arrival in the city (1902) was the one which marked the closing for all time of the annual St Louis Exposition. This Exposition should not be confused with the World's Fair of 1904. The annual Fall festival, held in connection with the Veiled Prophet's Parade and Ball, included displays of farm and manufactured products at Exposition hall, concerts by Gilmore's band in the earlier years, and by Souza's in the later ones, and a week of racing at Fairground Park. These events attracted throngs from many sections of Missouri and Illinois as well as virtually the whole population of St. Louis. The Veiled Prophet's Parade and Ball, held on the night immediately following his Majesty's parade, originally was given at the Merchants Exchange. When the St Louis Coliseum was constructed, the Ball took place there until erection of the Municipal Auditorium brought about another shift of the scene.

The Veiled Prophet's Parade and Ball, resembling the Mardi Gras at New Orleans, continues to be the Fall entertainment feature in St. Louis. Founded in the late 1870's, the festivities have been held yearly with two exceptions in 1917 and 1942 when the United States was at war. Throng's attracted by the annual event meant much to barrooms and bordellos in the neighborhood of the Coliseum. I chanced to be conducting a resort about a block from the coliseum in some of the years the Veiled Prophet's Parade and Ball were held there. As a result of this proximity to the festal scene, my business boomed.

Admission to the Ball was confined to those of the socially prominent, but all of the adjacent underworld resorts were magnets for the masses attracted to the city during the season of merry-making. My house, near the Coliseum, was the first of its kind I conducted in the city. From there, I re-established myself at the Pine Street address mentioned earlier in this narrative. I am pleased to record that my career in the profession ended soon after that time and happily too, for then it was I became the wife of a brilliant and loyal man.

In 1904, Margaret purchased a modern, twelve-room, stone-front dwelling at 2112 Pine Street from John Lyons for $9000.

With a tidy sum of money given me by Pete, I set myself up in business - a business as old as recorded history. My house was on Pine street and I was a full-fledged "landlady" who boasted an even dozen girls, the most beautiful in the bawdry belt. I had no rules for my own conduct. I was guided solely by whims of the moment. The tinsel of the underworld was glamor to me. I studied the wiles practiced by veteran vampires, learned to tilt my hat at a more teasing angle, how to apply rouge and produce the most alluring effect. How to spread flattery to lure financially lush men. I practiced tricks of cunning and glory in the delusion I was making myself important in the eyes of my coworkers in coquetry. I fancied myself to be a high stepper, the queen of the super-spiced carnal life. I reveled in the belief I was unexcelled as a bacchante when in reality, I was a booby.

My participation in these underworld orgies was known only to my masculine acquaintances and those of my own sex engaged in my means of livelihood. Associates I formed in other spheres of activity were not aware I was leading the life of a feminine Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. I can recall but vaguely the months immediately following my debut as a landlady, but I know that I acquired many acquaintances, most of whom were prodigious spenders. There were almost endless rounds of revelry. My wardrobe was enriched by many costly garments. I acquired Jim's, a saddle horse and a splendid driving team. The gems and horses were gifts from men.

Incidents which preceded my marriage, as described in these pages, occurred soon after I established my first resort in St. Louis. It was situated at 2112 Pine street. I had the dubious distinction of operating the only establishment of its kind along that thoroughfare. The fact that the number of my Pine Street address was the same whether read forwards or backwards prompted Harry Turner, brilliant and eccentric editor of Much Ado to comment in his publication, "Marjorie's house number is calculated to catch him coming or going."

These youngsters soon find out that only hard cash, liberally spent, is what counts in a 'ho house. They make more and more drinks to stimulate their gushing talk and arouse the art of

intimacy, telling a girl more lies in a minute than the average person could tell in a year. He is madly in love with her. He is going to take her out of the colorful place and buy her an apartment, horses and carriages and the finest clothes - yes indeed. She'll be the best dressed woman in the city. But he does not fool her for a moment. She knows he is a good-for-nothing, insidious youth who never worked one day in his life. But she twines her arms around his neck and kisses him. Then the self-important guest raises his voice. He is getting drunker and yells, "Yes, deah! We will have ten children," while she is leading him out of the back door saying, "Nice little house in the back. Stay there, dear, and wait for me."

Then there are the bores and blusterers, who blow in like a blast of Winter wind that nearly blows one out of the door.

"Hello, blowholes! Making any money tonight? How are you all feeling anyway?"

"Fine, old blowhole. Blowing hot or cold air as usual, blowhole. Indeed, that's a hole in the ice to which the whales and seals come up for breath. So that's what you call them."

"Ah, well, isn't that what you called us?"

"Oh, did I?"

"Yes, you did. So now blow yourself and buy us a drink."

If the stoney stare of all the girls fails to produce the desired results, he too is shown to the back door and a finger points to the little square house in the rear.

Phyllis the Vixen

There was one girl in my house I'll never forget. Her name was Phyllis. She paid little heed to the fashions of the day, yet she always flounced to perfection in her exquisite gowns cut into slashes, falling from her shoulders to her feet. The pans tied back with little bows of ribbon showing the bright colors beneath, reminding one of the Spangled Coquette which is the little hummingbird. She wore her clothes with such dignity and pomp, it made her alluring and dangerous. Her fascinating personality was enhanced by her whims and fads and complex ideas which were put into a semblance of modesty, but in truth, she usually converted her physical and mental charms into vulgarity.

Oh yes, Phyllis knew all the tricks of the trade. She would invent words and phrases and put them in sort of a form that would make them roar with laughter while her enthusiasm would kindle in a blaze. She would tell them fantastic tales of luxury and vice, the narrative rolling from her lips as smoothly as a song from a canary, soft as the tone of a musical instrument. Her mind was boundless as the waves of the ocean as she sat and talked, puffing out her cheeks, showing the black patch on one of them, her shapely legs thrown over one side of a big armchair. The girls would say, "You use such big words Phyllis! We don't understand half of them!"

"Fufu. Who can't understand the English language, the language of civilization, commerce, society, religion, the greatest language of all time, or any tongue of man!"

She claimed to be a fortune teller and made every girl believe she was going to marry a millionaire. "Oh Phyllis," I said one day, "You talk and talk and make the girls believe anything you tell them. They won't hustle anymore! They are waiting for that millionaire you told them they were going to marry. What fairy tales!"

"Did you ever hear the story about the girl who dreamed she was climbing a ladder, and when she reached the topmost rung, found herself in heaven? Oh hell! She was dreaming about the little cherubs they talk about in the bible. The winged guardians of the celestial hierarchy. One of the mysteries of the scriptures. But I do say dreams come true."

"You live in a world of dreams don't you Phyllis?"

“Yes, in a way. I live in a beautiful edifice of nature, Marjorie. Floating along like a feathery object before the wind that blows in erratic puffs and has neither shape nor color. We are nothing but a mere shadow, a speck on this Earth anyway,” she said and proceeded to tell me about the lovely man she entertained the previous night. “Oh, he was so handsome, reminded me of a nude statue I once saw of Apollo.”

“Do he come heah?” asked the maid rolling her big eyes listening to Phyllis.

“In mythology, Nina, Apollo was the perfect man. Venus fell in love with him, just as I fell in love with that man last night. He would take any woman's ordinary.”

“What's that, Miss Phillips?”

“That’s something a woman carries with you, Nina. Can’t throw it on a shelf nor that $100 he gave me.”

“What! Do you mean to tell me he gave you $100! I bet you cribbed that hundred bucks, didn't you?”

“Gee whiz but you are sly as Samson's foxes, Marjorie. What if I did? Passion distracts judgment.” she laughed

Just then, Dolly walked in the room. Did he really give you $100 Phyllis?

“That’s none of your business, you little bag of nothing. You tried hard enough to cop him flouncing in and out of my room and when you set yourself down on one of the chairs, there you sat as though you had glue all over your cloths, and then when I finally got rid of you, as you left the room, you winked at him and then left your door ajar you little hussy!”

The girls roared with laughter. She always kept the girls laughing.

There was one man came to my house I shall never forget. He would drop in every night with his pockets full of money and tell me how fine I was and wanted me to meet his wife.

“Indeed I would be delighted to meet her. I'll invite her down for dinner. I can have the maid lead all the drunks around to the back door and have all the girls go up and down the back stairs.”

So the arrangement was made. I got out my fine linen and cut glass and silverware, and told them a to keep the lady’s glass filled with champagne. The maid obeyed orders so faithfully

the lady got helplessly drunk and I put her to bed in my room. And then I put the husband to bed with Phyllis. I knew that was a shocking thing to do, but I got pickled myself.

When the wife woke up, she began screaming for her husband. I flew to Phyllis's room and thumped on the door. But they were so besotted with the bulk of booze they had consumed I could not awaken them and had to break the door open. The wife heard the confusion and came rushing in the room. She ran out screaming, "I'll divorce you! I'm in love with Arthur anyway.!"

I'll never forget the look on that man's face. Oh, how his jaw fell and his lip curled into a reptilian slit, hate etched into the intense line of his face as he glared at me and barked, "Why did you allow me to retire with that woman?"

Pointing his finger menacingly at Phyllis, I could answer for I knew it was wrong. But it took the dauntless and cunning Phyllis to silence that gentleman with a valley of vitriolic words.

"That woman?" she mocked as she bounced out of bed like a tennis ball, "You mean me?"

"Yes, you viper. If I had a rawhide I would give you a good beating!"

"You would? What for?"

"Forcing me to go to bed with you when you knew my wife was with me, you dirty w****."

"Force you? You were a willing subject.

"What me? Why I don't even know your name. What's your name anyway?"

"Oh, I have various names. One for my youth, one for mature age, and one for my business."

Then, she recalled the reference to her as a dirty w**** and it aroused her to fury and reached the very roots of her hair. She shook her head like Medusa, the Greek myth whose serpent entwined head was so dreadful, the side of it turned all those who looked at her into stone.

He was so angry, he seized her by the arm.

"Let me go you! Do you think this is a laughter house?"

"No, it's a whorehouse and you are the biggest w**** in it! The very idea of forcing me to your bed!"

That remark stirred her to even further fury. She shrieked, “You're like all the men sneaking out on your wife. You can’t alter the treachery of a beast in pants. He nourishes sin and grovels in his passionate and extravagant desires and forages on women, like the artistic little ants foraging to build their homes on the hills. Most men of your breed would mortgage their souls as a pawn for…” She broke off her denunciation in a tirade of little French phrases that were sizzling hot and strode out of the room crying as though her heart was broken.

The next day, I asked her why she cried. “Because of a man, a man I loved! That's why I am in your house. Oh, how I loved him! I was young then and thought life was one long true road to paradise and when we sat alone in the twilight and I put my arms around him, I thought the very room breathed peace and eternal happiness. Oh, how good I was then!” she sobbed. “He was a Protestant. I was a Catholic and always abstained from meat on Friday and never failed to attend early Mass. When I would come home, he would say to me, someday you'll wear a coif.”

“Oh, no I won’t. Someday, I'll be your wife.”

“Of course you will darling. When I fall into money.”

“Then, something happened. I had gloomy misgivings that aroused my suspicions. I could feel an impending calamity. Like an animal who observes a change in his master's behavior, I knew, I knew, trouble was lurking, trouble for me. But he would swear there was no basis for that worry. He loved me, always would love me, never would he leave me. Oh, how the unfortunate experience is recorded in my memory and lingers with acute bitterness. When the actual truth was disclosed to me, I was like a tropical bird stripped of its plumage, for the man I loved was leaving me. But why recall those long days of suffering? After he left me and married a society girl, I came here to St. Louis. Someone told me about you and here I am.”

Another incident concerning Phyllis came to my mind. One of her gentle friends was a descendant of an old St Louis family. He chanced to be one of the few scions of the original settlers of the city who had retained their wealth. He was accustomed to sit in a chair in a downtown hotel, his feet propped high on one of the pillars supporting the colonnade, his chair tipped far back. Since custom precluded fancy ladies from greeting their male friends on the street, Phyllis instantly conceived an idea, as she turned the corner leading to the hotel, of making her presence known to the gentleman seated so comfortably. Within a few steps of him,

she drew a long hat pin from her Gainsborough model and stuck the pin into his skin between two ribs and passed on most silently. She heard a shriek and a crash. She looked back and saw her gentleman friend sprawled on the sidewalk, his feet kicking wildly in the air. He had fallen backwards when the sudden pain of the pinprick had upset his equilibrium. Phyllis giggled and so did Dolly and the other girls who had accompanied her on the down stroll. The wealthy victim of the hat pin subsequently told me he dared not tell those who had been sitting near him what had caused his grotesque plunge to the pavement. However in a day or two, he was as devoted as ever to the irrepressible Phyllis, the vixen.

“Never Give a Sucker an Even Break”

Clementine was another girl in my house whose eyes and form were an attraction to the masculine eyes. She never missed an opportunity to accentuate the beauty of her legs dangling them, as if unconsciously, from the side of a capacious armchair. And she knew how to display her hair profitably both to herself and to men. Although Tex Guinan has been wildly outfitted with originating a celebrated night club slogan, I happen to know that Clementine coined it while an inmate of my house years before. That slogan was “Never give a sucker an even break.”

Two blocks from my house on Pine Street was one of the few remaining mansions which had been built before the Civil War. The structure stood as it did when erected about seventy five years earlier. The original owners were dead and their descendants had moved to more modern residences in an exclusive West End neighborhood. A privy stood in the backyard of the old mansion. Part of it was dug deep in the ground and walled like a well. Surmounting it was a frame structure resembling a telephone booth. This mansion, at the time of which I write, had been converted into a few cheap flats, one of which was occupied by a family that included a young man who was very attentive to Clementine. This young man, a well-paid mechanic, was engaged to be married but the situation did not deter him from paying weekly calls at my house to spend the night with Clementine. One day, just following his last visit to my house, we heard wild shouts and saw evidence of a great commotion at the place where stood the once elegant mansion. All the girls rushed to the scene and found Clementine's mechanic friend being hoisted by firemen up a ladder from the odorous deep well of the privy. The wooden seat had collapsed and he had fallen into the privy up to his neck in contents while dressed in his Sunday suit preparatory to visiting his fiancé. So ashamed was he at his predicament that he did not visit the betrothed for two weeks.

Clementine did not remain long as the star of my galaxy of gals for she became the bride of a St. Louis man who became wealthy some years after their wedding. I earnestly do not cite the cases of Clementine and myself as typical examples of good luck which befalls inmates of a house of ill repute. The men who became our husbands were only two exceptions among the thousands who do not hold such liberal views regarding girls with our background. The

accustomed lot of these creatures is to remain in these establishments until age robs them of attractiveness. Then, having wasted their financial gains in riotous living, it is out into the streets of poppers – or to death via the river or pistol or poison root.

Before and After Prohibition

With the exception of resorts in the Tenderloin and slum districts and in areas where there were large elements of population not long removed from Europe, women did not mingle with men in bar rooms as is the custom now at many taverns. During pre-prohibition years, a large number of these resorts had rooms at the rear with side entrances, if fronts of these places were situated on corners, for feminine patrons. Over the doors to these rear rooms, were signs reading "Ladies Entrance." These doors also served as exits for those who were "Rushing the Growler" as the carrying of beer in buckets and other receptacles then was termed.

In the years just following my arrival in the city, one schooner of beer entitled the bar customer to consume all the free lunch he desired. With the repeal of prohibition, bar rooms here did not revive their custom of providing a wide assortment of free lunch for patrons. In fact, no lunch of any kind was served without payment for it.

For some reason, repeal of the Prohibition law also marked the end of several famous St. Louis restaurants. Such establishments as Faust's, McTague's and Lippe's have no exact counterparts in the city as I know it today.

Newspaper Accounts of Margaret

A collection of news articles reprinted pertaining to Margaret from 1904 to 1907. The reader should know that Margaret was often known by several names. At the start of life, she was Margaret Helen Chambers but when operating her business in St. Louis, she went by the name Margery Rhodes, Margaret E. Rhodes or, as it was sometimes spelled in the newspapers, Marjorie or Margie.

July 21, 1904 - "Marjorie Rhodes" was arrested and charged with luring girls to St. Louis. (Margaret used several aliases The witnesses, three young women from Alabama, claimed that Rhodes, the alleged keeper of a resort at 2112 Pine Street, furnished them with transportation from their home state with the understanding that Rhodes would provide them with employment. In the course of their journey, one of the girls' father telegraphed the St. Louis Police department to alert them to the fact that this daughter had run away and was heading to St. Louis. The police detained two of the girls upon their arrival at Union Station. Margaret was released on $2400 bond signed by Jacob Reinhold. Presumably, the girls returned to their families.

September 26, 1904 - Fireman were called to the flat occupied by "Margie Rhodes" where "flames had broken out in a magnificently appointed palm room". The loss was estimated at $500 and extensive damage caused by "firemen with muddy boots" who pulled rich tapestry from the walls and ruined costly wallpaper.

June 29, 1907 - Three men including State Senator Thomas E. Kinney, and three women, were arrested the previous morning at 2112 Pine Street. The men were charged with disturbing the peace. Margaret E. Rhodes was charged with being the keeper of the resort. Charges were dismissed in July.

December 15, 1908 - Mrs. Louis Becker, beautiful wife of Henry (Kid) Becker, "King of Sports", was arrested at Marjorie Rhodes' house at 2112 Pine Street. At the time of the raid, it was reported that Marjorie Rhodes was found in the kitchen, busily opening six bottles of wine. Marjorie and Mrs. Becker were held for Judge Tracy's court. One additional note: The police learned that Marjorie had a telephone in her house - a violation of police orders. However since

she owned the property, the police could not order her to move, but they did order her to conduct a proper place.

Introduction to William Marion Reedy

Margaret provides a brief biography of Reedy and recounts stories told to her by him about his upbringing.

It is difficult to adequately portray impressive men of nearly three decades ago. Some men are born brilliant, some achieve greatness. William Marion Reedy, in my humble opinion, was born a genius but added to his mental stature by hard work in his chosen field. At the time which I write, he already had been aiding such aspirants to literary note as Edgar Lee Masters, author of Spoon River anthology, Zoe Akins, Sarah Teasdale, Theodore Dreiser and numerous others. My husband, Mr. Reedy, printed Fanny Hurst's first story, as well as the early efforts of the others named. He also introduced Patience Worth to the public. Patience was the purported personality of a woman in England whose books Mrs. John H. Curran received via the Ouija board out of the long ago.

The fact that Mr. Reedy had but a short time to live did not impair his ability to write interestingly or speedily. He continued to turn out an average of 5,000 words daily. If friends dropped in to see him at his office or our home, he had the cheerful air of old and seem to be as interested in worldly things as though he had many years of life remaining

His mother, Mrs. Anna Marion Reedy, a woman of unusual mental ability, was of gentle disposition, of strong religious and charitable bent so pronounced indeed that she was acclaimed the little Irish Sister of the Poor throughout the Patch. Little Willy, as the diminutive Mrs Reedy called her favorite child, lavished her love upon him and he reciprocated the affection. The boy's head was crowned with rippling masses of jet black hair. His large eyes also were black. Even before reaching his teens, Willy's voice was so loud and resonant as to alarm his mother. Unless he gave vent to it when angered, he was inclined to be silent.

She was wont to say, "Begorra, ye well know how much I love my darlin' lad. And well I know how great is yore affection for me. But, faith, 'tis true I fear someday ye'll be the death of me! Ye speak with the wisdom uv a man fully fifty years old. Where, oh where does sich larnin' come from!"

Mother Reedy herself should have known why her favorite child was so precocious, for she was unusually intelligent, a linguist with more than a smattering of several languages but was

accustomed to lapse into the vernacular when speaking the tongue of her Irish forebears. The Reedy home and Kerry Patch was as individualistic as the mistress of the household. On the walls were tintypes, other photos and paintings of members of the family and of earlier generations, both maternal and paternal. Gaily colored rugs covered the floors and muslin curtains draped the windows and every room of the five in the cottage was spotless. In the center of the front yard was a massive apple tree whose foliage shaded the home, the shingles on the roof having been of the type prevailing in the pre-Norman days.

Mrs. Reedy weighed barely 100 pounds. and her complexion was as clear as that of the water of any mountain stream in the nearby Ozark. The hands of the mistress of the Reedy household were small and delicately molded – almost as tiny as the Rue-anemone, a little white flower akin to the Irish daisy. Those hands fashioned exquisite needlepoint lace, knitted socks for her own family and poor folk nearby, kneaded bread and devised luscious stew.

At that time, in the heyday of Kerry Patch as the Irish center of the city, goats roamed the streets with dogs of diverse breeds and mongrels of uncertain lineage. The goats were accustomed to scale walls and nosedive as though from later invented airplanes into Mother Reedy's kitchen when the odor of succulent food, in the process of cooking, permeated their nostrils. Little Willy, of course, pampered his own pet goat, Stir, that was in the vanguard of the herds that made themselves much at home on (and in) the range - the kitchen range of the Reedy menage.

One day soon after Mrs. Reedy had kindled the fire in the kitchen range, she heard an agonizing bleat from Little Willy's billy goat, but a search for the odorous quadruped was futile. At the height of the hunt, the oven door was butted open and out leapt her son's beloved Stir!

On another occasion, this goat leaped upon Mrs. Reedy's chiffonier breaking bottles of perfume and other articles. Incidentally, all in the ensuing scents did not come from the broken perfume containers.

And still another day when the favorite child seemingly was oblivious to the clicking of his mother's knitting needles, the aroma of boiling tea and roasting apples on the hearth, he leaned over after dropping the book he was reading when sprawled on an ottoman and scribbled something on a window pane. His mother gazed at the written words and exclaimed, “Faith, now

what have ye scribbled! Some more of yore nonsense perhaps, or maybe yore sage remarks upon what you've just read in that book intended to be read by one far beyond yore years. Innyway, ye're forivver scribbling something, somewhere. Willy, that causes me a world o'trouble some time, and 'twil be too soon too, I'm going to lambast ye for all the bother ye cause me."

But mother Reedy did not chastise Little Willy soon thereafter, nor at any time during the years he grew to manhood. Whenever the boy became unduly noisy or otherwise objectionable, Mrs. Reedy would turn her piercing black eyes upon her son and utter only two words, firmly but softly: "Silence, Willy!"

When the boy went to church, he did not carry a Bible, as was the practice of the other children in the parish. Instead, he filled the pockets of his Sunday suit with a collection of small books and pamphlets, a batch of writing paper and pencils, all having been transferred from his garments of the other days. The bulging pockets evoked laughter from his playmates, but Little Willy ignored the merriment and, proud as a peacock, whistled and started his way from the family fireside to the house of worship. His Sunday suit included close-fitting knee breeches similar to those worn during the American Revolution, a jacket too narrow at the waist for the boy's comfort, a white choker topping his ornate shirt and supporting his chin, half boots or footwear laced at the ankles with large shiny buckles.

Mrs. Reedy often admonished her boy saying, "If Fortune should do her wurst, may she nivver allow ye to lose yore honesty. Nivver permit self interest to down ye. If there be an outstanding virtue on this earth, faith, 'tis personal virtue, far removed from all pride and vanity. 'Tis not riches that counts, Willy. Ye may squander yore money but nivver must ye waste yore virtue or your brilliant brain. I want ye to be a priest, Willy, me boy. Yore Uncle Pat was a priest, as was yore Uncle Mike."

To these admonitions her son would reply, "I don't want to be a priest. I want to be a writer."

Mrs. Reedy persisted in her pleading that her son be prepared for the ministry but to no avail. She did not live to see her son found what became known as Reedy's School of Literature and otherwise reach eminence.

Willy, in his earlier years, was an altar boy in the church the Reedy family attended. He teased his mother by expressing regret that he must continue for a time his duty as altar boy. Not long before Mrs. Reedy's death, she prayed in Latin, using the words of the canticles and the "*Te Deum*". Willy and his father were mystified until the parish priest explained that the words were from Catholic hymns.

The boy, while critical of his mother's ideas of a career for him, had only spoken admiration for her attire. In Mrs. Reedy's wardrobe were clothing of diverse description. She had brought from Ireland cashmere in paisley patterns to match her paisley shawl, flowered foulards, poplin's, pongees, taffetas and all of the best quality. Whether she was at home or clad in her Sunday best for church and neighborhood gatherings, the mistress of the Reedy household always wore at her throat an elegant cameo brooch.

Precocious Willy's father, Patrick Reedy, was a six-footer who stood straight as a ramrod. His shoulders were broad, his eyes as black as those of the colleen who became his bride. All in the Kerry Patch respected Pat Reedy but smiled at his custom of carrying daily a small paper bag from which he shelled and ate almonds. His air was far greater than that of other men in the Patch. He treasured a copy of what was reputed to be the first American play, "*The Contrast*". Patrick Reedy was a devout church man who became a patrolman in St. Louis and rose to a high rank on the police force.

I once asked my husband how it came about that, although he personally was so genial, he wrote so many articles and comments of a belligerent nature. He replied, "Well, as you know, I'm Irish in the first place. In the second place, perhaps my belligerent writing is due in some measure to the environs of my childhood and the stories told to me by men who had witnessed some of the duels on Bloody Island. (It ceased to be an island and the area no longer was known by its opprobrious name. It became part of East St. Louis, Illinois.) Probably another influence of my childhood and early manhood was the reign in Missouri of the Jesse James gang of outlaws. These men were the outcome of the bitter Civil War days in this state and the notorious record of William Quantrill and other bloody raiders on the Missouri-Kansas border just before and during that war. The Jesse James gang was in its heyday when I was growing up in the Patch. Jesse James was killed in 1882 and his brother Frank surrendered several months later when I was a

reporter on the old *Missouri Republican*. Incidentally, I recall that Stanley Waterloo, later to become a noted journalist, scored a news scoop when Bob Ford treacherously killed Jesse James at St Joseph Missouri."

Margaret Meets Billy Reedy

First Meeting

It was about this time, there occurred my meeting with the outstanding literary figure in St. Louis of his time. Then, he was nationally, even internationally, known as the owner and editor of Reedy's Mirror and in the subsequent years, he published in his weekly magazine, the first writings of several persons who became celebrated literary men and women.

I was with a party of four at Faust's restaurant, which was then known from coast to coast for its fine food and wines. Three men were seated at the table immediately opposite the one toward which our party was walking. The three arose and one of them was paying the bill when a young woman with me exclaimed, "Oh there's Billy Reedy!" She stepped forward and spoke to him. He then returned with her to our table. I was the only one of the four in our party who was unacquainted with Mr. Reedy. When the editor was introduced to me, he said, "So you're the girl I've heard so much about."

"Nothing to my disadvantage, I hope," was my rejoinder, blushing.

Except for the greetings exchanged, no one other than William Marion Reedy spoke throughout the time he sat with us. I cannot voice the opinions of my companions but, judging from their rapt countenances, they were as deeply interested in his utterances as was I. His was a magnetic personality. As he brushed back, from time to time, the jet black curl that fell from his forehead, the movement accentuated the beauty of his small hands which, though delicately formed, we're not the least of feminine. His face, of pinkish hue, beamed as he warmed to his various themes. I cannot now recall all he said, but I know his talk was interesting, and I sat fascinated by the ease with which he expressed his views. His large and lustrous black eyes were fixed on me when he lifted a glass of wine, clasped my hand and said, "Wine is like a love potion. It fashions ideas in one's head. It leads one to yield to a woman's charms. When the grape is converted into wine or jelly, it is so fragrant, so tempting - - like yourself."

Oh, if he but meant it! I said to myself, but how could this brilliant man be interested in me - a nobody! But my nerve was colossal. I forthwith determined to win the affections of

William Marion Reedy. I lingered at the table while the others who had accompanied me left the restaurant.

"My mother worked hard," he said. "She knitted my socks, made my shirts, baked bread for the family. I want you to be a priest, Willie, she said to me. Two of your uncles were priests. I was an altar boy at the time. That's as near as I ever approached the priesthood. My father was a tall, broad shouldered man who often admonished me: Never cease to be honest, never allow self-interest to get the better of you. If in the many years I have devoted to writing I have always been honest in the views I've expressed, I'm sure it was primarily due to the teachings of my parents. Father was a St. Louis policeman for many years, eventually becoming night chief of police."

Mr. Reedy then said he knew of the brewer's son having urged me to marry him and of the young man's exile to the Klondike. Rejoining my friends outside Faust's, I exacted a promise from each of them never to tell my new acquaintance where I lived. This precaution was made useless, for on the first page of the morning paper the next day was a news story telling of an unnamed society man having fired a pistol through the keyhole of the door in my apartment. When the maid angered him by saying I was not in when he called, that afternoon Mr. Reedy telephoned me saying, "I suppose you're shot full of holes?"

Since at that time I had not read the news story, his words were meaningless to me. His explanation of the remark was followed by an invitation to dine with him that evening at a downtown cafe. As we ate, I told him of my life before coming to St. Louis stressing my determination because of my exceedingly brief connection with two jobs. If ever I sought employment again, never would I work for a woman.

Second Meeting

My second meeting with William Marion Reedy was embarrassing but only intensified my determination to win his lasting love.

I looked at myself in the mirror, put another dab of rouge on my face, another dab of powder and a little more lipstick. I walked downstairs, holding my long train. What annoying things they were. I was always tripping on mine.

“Put the foot warmer in the carriage, Nina. Goodbye.”

I stepped onto the carriage with all the airs of a queen. The waiter led me to our table which was reserved and decorated with flowers. I was too early which embarrassed me for I didn't want to sit at the table alone. I said to the waiter, “I’ll just wait in the toilet.”

He looked at me saying nothing. The room was dreadfully warm and though I was half roasted, I kept my coat on. I thought it gave me a distinguished air.

I put another dab of paint on my face, more powder and lip paste and gave my head a twist. I peeped out and saw Billy Reedy and another gentleman sitting at the table. I took another squint at myself and then sallied forth with the airs of the fille de joie. Conscious of people looking at me as I wedged my way past the tables, when I finally landed at their table, so engrossed were they in conversation, they didn't see me. I stood behind Billy Reedy's chair and listened. They were talking about God and ritualism.

The gentleman with him who was so handsome said, “I wonder if the angels have a tongue. Can they see? Hear? Smell?”

“They are intangible but if they could smell the aroma of this delicious Chianti,” Billy Reedy chuckled, “they would become intoxicated. You don't drink it. It just slips down.” He filled the glasses with his fascinating little hands.

Each took a drink and you could hear the ripple of their laughter all over the room. The handsome man said, “Here's to the wild roses and the violets in their mossy bed peeping through the grass and the wind tossed leaves.”

Just then, I tapped Billy Reedy on the shoulder with that distinctive perception all coquettes possess and the indifference of a courtesan, and said, “You are all so interesting - talking about horology…” I stopped, acutely conscious of having said the wrong thing. “I… I mean the Angels.”

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I did not then know the almost unlimited liberality of his views on moral conduct. Otherwise, I would not have been so remorseful as when I awoke the next morning without recollection of our party. Where was the wad of banknotes totaling $200 I had when I went to the restaurant? Had I become so drunk as not only to disgrace myself in his eyes but to be robbed after we separated? And where did this parting occur?

He came to see me the next day, but I instructed Nina, the maid, to tell him I was asleep. That afternoon, I had two occasions for rejoicing. One was the arrival by messenger of lobster salad from McTague’s restaurant with Billy Reedy's compliments. The other was Nina's disclosure that my host at the cafe had returned the missing money to me. I do not know how he obtained the $200 but I infer he deemed it best to take the money for safe keeping until such time as I should be sober.

Third Meeting

Within a few days, I was to have my first Christmas with Mr. Reedy. I was painstaking in the preliminaries to this momentous event. Before donning new duds purchased for this particular occasion, I reveled in a Turkish bath, facial, manicure and hairdo. The new gown was a ravishing shade of purple chiffon velvet flounced with silver tissue and gold lace. I chose purple because that color was associated with royalty. Had not my mother been descended from the nobility? My slippers, made expressly for this occasion, were of gold brocade. My stockings were equally ornate. Other items in my costume included an ermine coat reaching to my insteps, white gloves with small gold buttons, and among the accessories of my makeup were a gold purse edged with diamonds and pearls, and a necklace whose many gems gleamed like a locomotive with almost countless headlights. It was a proud moment for me when I could remove the gloves and flash another array of diamonds bedecking my fingers.

I shall not dwell upon incidents of that Christmas dinner. Candidly, I have but a hazy recollection of the scenes when I imbibed too freely. Acquaintances later told me that I suddenly arose from the table as proudly as the swankiest dowager and, without a word of explanation to Mr. Reedy, walked out of Faust's restaurant.

I do not know how I got home but acquaintances told me, when I regained my senses, that I had tried to open the front door by using the lorgnette as a key. Once inside the door, the long chain on which the lorgnette hung became entangled in the train of my dress and I pitched headlong at the foot of the stairs. Before aid could reach me, I was trying to scale the stairs by crawling, but scarcely had I progressed two or three steps upward when I tumbled back again. Then, I rolled over, thrust my feet upward and kicked furiously, all the while bawling like a baby bereft of its nursing bottle. Friendly hands retrieved the wreckage of my hat, muff and purse while other friendly hands carried me to my room.

When I awoke, which was about twelve hours after I had been put to bed, I asked the maid to bring in my finery so that I might feast my eyes upon it once more. I nearly swooned at the site of the raiment. It was almost a mass of tatters, for I had mopped up each step of the stairs

with the garments. Gems had been torn from my necklace and purse, gold buttons ripped from my gloves. If earlier in the proceeding night I had been a shining example of what the well-dressed woman of the Gay Nineties should wear, I now looked like Venus with dirty feet.

For two weeks, I was ashamed to face Mr. Reedy again. When we did meet, he graciously forgave me walking out on him at the restaurant. By New Year's day, I had become known in nightlife circles of St. Louis as Billy Reedy's girl. I continued to bear this appellation until the following summer when, after the granting of a marriage license and writs solemnized by a clergyman, I became Mrs. William Marion Reedy.

Life with Billy Reedy

The July 9, 1909 issue of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat carried an article entitled, "William M. Reedy Weds" with the subtitle, "Will Conduct Chicken Farm". The article stated that Reedy and Mrs. Margaret Helen Chambers were wed at 7:00 in the evening at their home on Manchester road. The Rev. Dr. W. F. Andrew of the Centenary Southern Methodist Church performed the ceremony. It was noted that they purchased a property in the county for $20,000.

In Man in the Mirror, author Max Putzel states that it was Margaret who precipitated the move to a 27-acre farm off Manchester and Berry roads in present day Rock Hill. He wrote, "She closed her notorious house, bought a farm in the county and sent packers to Reedy's rooms after they had crated her own belongings."

Reedy understood that the move to the farm would necessitate marrying Margaret. He was cheerful about it as indicated when he wrote to a friend saying, "Damned if her delight isn't the best thing I've seen for a coon's age. I suppose there'll be talk abut me, but to hell with it. There's been talk for eight years."

Some shocked readers cancelled their subscription to "The Mirror" and one of Reedy's reporters quit and left town. Others were more understanding, including President Theodore Roosevelt who invited Mrs. Reedy to a house party.

Margaret and Billy renamed the farm "Clonmel" in honor of the Ireland birthplace of Reedy's father.

Occasionally, Billy Reedy wrote about his life on the farm with Margaret at Clonmel. These stories appeared in "The Mirror" and local newspapers found that readers enjoyed reading about Margaret and Billy's attempts (or failures) to be farmers.

In 1911, their beautiful Queen Anne style house at Clonmel. burned to the ground. They were saddened by the loss of their dog but the heaviest blow was the destruction of Billy's collection of books valued at over $5000. The Reedys built another cottage and Margaret continued her dairy business. Soon, however,Margaret was involved in a controversy when, in 1913, she was accused of selling milk that had been watered down. Margaret fought back saying that the charges were false.

Continuing with her autobiography, Margaret related the following stories about events that occurred during her marriage to Billy Reedy.

Strauss's Studio and The Six Men

Of the many interesting events in my husband's life after our marriage, none is more vivid in my recollection than a party thrown in the St. Louis Studio of Julius Strauss, celebrated photographer for a quarter of a century or more in the Middle West. Gathered in the studio one afternoon about 25 years ago were six men varied in outstanding achievements. They were William Marion Reedy, George S. Johns, editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Harry B. Hawes, statesman of subsequent years, Mitchell Kennerly, a leader in literary affairs, August A. Busch, multi-millionaire brewer and Mr. Strauss himself. Today, with my limited writing ability I – the widow of William Marion Reedy– shall attempt to present a picture of the six cultured, brilliant men, most of them in December fields of endeavor.

Julius Strauss was tall, droll, suave. He had a military mien, his head thrown back proudly. Fittingly should he thus walk, for he had founded and still was maintaining at the time of the incidents related in the previous chapter the most celebrated photographic studio in the West. His was an electric voice. He was wont to relate a virtually endless chain of humor stories, spiced with seldom-used but appropriate adjectives, as he sat upon the edge of a table swinging one leg back and forth and tapping the floor with the other foot. Suddenly, he was accustomed to lean over and touch an electric gadget on the wall. Presto! And out would emerge a bottle of gin. Then he snapped another gadget on the side of the table and out flew a set of tulip-shaped goblets, whereupon he began mixing drinks with the poise of a Bartender Deluxe.

I knew then, as I know now, that Mr. Kennerly was a native of England. He appeared to be the youngest of the eight men gathered in the studio. I learned he had been business manager of the "Smart Set", a noted publication of years ago, had founded the "Reader Magazine" and became publisher of the "Forum" and "The Papyrus", as well as president of the Anderson Galleries in New York. I was told subsequently that he became managing director of the printing house of William Edwin Runge and lived at the Sherry Netherlands Hotel in Manhattan. I received a letter from him late in 1940. He wrote that he then was head of the 65th Street Book Shop, inc. at 866 Lexington Avenue, New York.

August A Busch, one member of the group in the studio who made no pretension of possessing literary talent, had light hair and blue eyes, which looked at one from bushy eyebrows with a seriousness that contrasted with his playful smile. His elegant manner won and retained friends. He was not aware, apparently of the attraction he had for his many friends and acquaintances.

I will digress briefly from the scene in the Strauss Studio to say that I recall him best as he was observed sitting at a desk in his office surrounded by sculptured busts, paintings and etchings of his father and other notables. Photographs of Harry B. Hawes, Mr. Reedy and James A. Reed, then United States Senator from Missouri, hung on walls in his office. When he arose in his pleasing manner as I called at his office one day, he asked me if I had observed a large man in the hallway.

"Yes, Gussie," I replied. "He is such a big fellow and seemingly is so strong I can compare him only to paintings and sculptor of Roman or Grecian gladiators."

"That's the reason I employ him," Mr. Busch resumed. "He's my bodyguard and carries ten revolvers," he laughed, perhaps at his exaggeration of the bodyguard's armed defense, but there was a shade of bitterness in his tone. His voice was harsh, his eyes were wistful. His life had been a curious frustration. He had much executive ability and had been been given reasonable opportunities, Doubtless, he would have become truly great, but he lived, in the main, almost solely to carry on the trust of his father, the late multi-millionaire brewer, Adolphus Busch, had left behind. The aim of August A. Busch was the preservation, intact, of the vast Anheuser-Busch brewing, railroad and diverse other properties, and to aid those who benefited by his father's estate. The name "Anheuser" in the title of the corporation is that of the elder Busch's father-in-law, who was the founder of the brewery. Willingly, August Busch walked in the shadow of his father's wealth and business attainments, but the burden grew heavy at times. On the day of my call at his office, I walked over and looked at a painting of his father. Pointing to the canvas, I remarked, "I once heard an amusing story about him."

"What was that, Marjorie?"

"Well, one night, your father and several of his old friends strolled into a tavern and sat drinking beer for a long time. The next day, the proprietor of the resort put the chair in which

your father had been seated on top of the bar and probably proclaimed to those gathered in the place: “See dot chair? Vell, vot you dink? Adolphus Busch sat in dot chair for dree hours last night!”

My reference to his father brought tears to Mr. Busch's eyes, and after a few moments he said, “My father oftentimes was annoyed by persons whose intentions doubtless were good. I, too, often are worried almost to death by certain folk who think they have a good thing in a business way and seek financial backing. Only yesterday, there were five men in my office insisting I financed them in a movie venture, the film to be titled, “Christ Turning Water Into Wine.”

My story relating to his father, so far as I knew, was no occasion for reminding August Busch of the callers of the day before, but I did not ask him why his talk turned in that direction.

Now back to the various men in the Strauss studio:

Harry B. Hawes had served in the National House of Representatives before being elected United States Senator. He was a Major in the Intelligence Bureau of the American Army during World War I and joint author of The Hawes-Cutting bill in the Senate which pledged independence to the Philippine Commonwealth. He was counselor for organizations seeking to preserve wild game and member of the Senate committee on migratory bird conservation. Soon after the Japanese bombing of Pearl harbor, which precipitated the United States into another war, Mr. Hawes broadcast a radio appeal to Filipinos to continue battling with the American forces until the Nippanese invaders were driven from the islands. He resumed the practice of law at Washington and St. Louis after his retirement from the Senate. He was an organizer of the Lakes to the Gulf Deep Waterway Association. Although Mr. Hawes makes no pretense to having literary skill such as was possessed by William Marion Reedy and Elbert Hubbard, the former Senator is the author of several books on wild game, dogs and conditions in the Philippines.Throughout his residence in St Louis he was a power in city and state politics.

The group in the Strauss Studio began an animated exchange of views, pertinent and otherwise, on current events as well as references to incidents of that particular meeting. I cannot, of course, after all the years give a verbatim account of the repartee, but I do recall that Billy Reedy dominated the scene. Oh, the charm of his rich, rolling Irish voice, the range of his

words and knowledge! He talked of many things– about the sun and its relation to other planets. He finally directed his remarks to the Advent of mankind on earth.

Here, George S. Johns, the great newspaper editor, interrupted the editor of Reedy's Mirror saying, “Education, environment and sex– from generation to generation– have produced a vast population in a variety that increases more and more with the moral freedom of man. How wonderfully constructed is man!”

“Quite true,” Mr. Reedy assented, “but of woman? She is superior in dignity and rank. She can manufacture– in ones and twos, and, less frequently, in even larger numbers such as quintuplets and so forth.”

“Go on, Billy,” said Mr. Johns.

“Well, I shall add only that women are multifarious– they reproduce,” chuckled Mr. Reedy with a prodigious shake of his massive head.

“But women are weak. Their weakness lies in the love of flattery,” protested Mr. Busch. “They are not interested in much else.”

I wanted to resent this remark but was afraid to defend my sex or voice any opinion definitely in this galaxy of men brilliant in one phase of life or another. I leaned over to pluck a flower from the vase in the center of the table and spilled an almost full bottle of gin over Mr. Strauss’s trousers. The unperturbed host did not even wince.

A moment later, editor Reedy advised, “Just run over to the window, Julius. I'm sure the bright sun and strong wind will soon dry ‘em.”

I was so chagrined and exasperated that I grasped my glass and emptied it with one gulp. Then, I became emboldened by the potency of the liquor. I held up my hand so that all might see the sparkler on one of my fingers as I said, “A woman gives and gives and sometimes has to take the consequences as well as the bruises, too, when a man tries to hold her and subjugate–er, er, I mean, I mean, subject…”

I looked at Billy Reedy out of the corner of one eye to see if he had noted my verbal blunder. There was no indication of that, either in his countenance or in any other word to the contrary. He leaned over and kissed me. At that supreme moment, I thought St. Louis was the most beautiful spot in the world.

“There are oodles of smart women,” I declared. “Take Cleopatra, for instance. She had the brains of ten men.”

“You're sharp as a needle,” praised Billy Reedy.

“Oh, Billy (that was the first time I ever called him by his first name in public), don't flatter me. Cleopatra's Needle is only a long obelisk-like thing with Egyptian hieroglyphics on it.”

“There's one in Central Park in New York, near the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” supplemented Mitchell Kennerly.

At this juncture, Mr, Strauss flipped his foot against a rosewood taboret surrounded by a gorgeous Mycenaean vase and out flew another bottle of gin. Then, the group talked about sculpture, painting, the revival of art and science as a consequence of the Renaissance, the ignorance and bigotry of the Middle Ages and many other things - some of the side remarks making them laugh uproariously. I laughed too, but I must confess that in nearly every instance, I didn't know what I was laughing at.

I reached across the table to get a bottle of wine and when I slithered it back to my chair my arm took all the bottles and glasses with me with a great crash! Horrified at my second mishap of the afternoon, I shamefacedly noticed, through blurry eyes, pools of soda, gin and wine cascading down Mr. Strauss's already dampened trousers.

“Oh,” exclaimed Mr. Hubbard half humorously but with a provocative tone in his voice, “What a puddle in the middle! Julius, how you disport yourself! But accidents will happen, as Billy Reedy remarked at the time of the earlier Julius/Margaret mishap. I can only repeat Billy's advice: Julius, just run over to the window– the sun will dry ‘em.”

Additionally ashamed, I began to cry and forthwith. Billy kissed me, wiping away the tears. Then the talk turned to a more serious vein.

“How rich God has made this earth, with an abundance of everything,” remarked Mr. Reedy. “Here we find the better dispossessed by sweetness and warmth, usurping cold therein. The world is fair and charity makes it all the fairer. Its glow reminds us of the long night of death and the time when peace shall come - when the song of triumph shall take unto itself and note that voices lament, and the beautiful symbols fall into holy dust.”

Mr. Kennerly, observing Mr. Reedy's clearness of complexion, was prompted to remark., “It’s whispered, Billy, you are an animated ad for a certain baby food product.”

To this, Mr. Reedy responded, “When I visited you in New York, Mitchell, you had a private elevator in your home which, by the way, was right in the middle of Manhattan, with a lawn big enough to constitute a truck garden. Every morning you ordered your charioteer to drive your vehicle up those big stone steps of your house so I would not have to walk a single step. I almost lost my power of locomotion.”

“Anyway, you haven't lost your gift of gab nor your artistry with the pen,” rejoined Mr. Kennerly. “How do you do it, anyway?”

“Oh, it comes and goes in whirls, revealing its glimpses not so clear or prolonged as to make a definite impression.”

“Well, Billy, your variety of words and your choice of them compel me to seek a dictionary every time I read your Mirror,” interjected Mr. Hawes.

“Yes,” said Mr. Johns, “Billy coins words and phrases and has broadened the scope of literary laws with his fantastic application awards. He makes a symphony of all he writes. No artist with a brush could paint pictures as vividly as you can with your pen, Billy.”

I recall that Harry had observed at one time in the conversation that ensued that day, “People should be governed by reason. It is akin to God's Divine power, which moves the universe. The college man's mind is better trained than that of the less educated. A collegian has a clearer vision than that of one of an untrained mind, for he knows there's a reason for everything.”

“Yes,” said Mr. John, “Even the wet spot on Julius Strauss's trousers and those ensuing tears in Margaret Reedy's eyes would attract attention anywhere.”

That afternoon in the Strauss studio, Mr. Hawes turned to Mr. Reedy in the course of the animated conversation and inquired, “What are you trying to do with your necktie, Billy?”

“Trying to match the appearance of yours,” Mr. Reedy responded nonchalantly, his reply prompted by the fact that Mr. Hawes in those days almost invariably wore a Windsor tie whose ends flooded gracefully down his immaculate shirt front.

“Heaven's! It's twisted and tortured into a tight little knot.” Mr. Hawes explained as his fingers groped to determine the contour of his neckwear.

“What kind of knot? Flemish? Virgin? or lover's knot?”

“None in the list. It’s a hangman's knot!”

“Then my imitation was not timely, Harry, for I was seeking to make a wreath of my tie for you. In the 14th century, executioners wreathed the prisoner’s neck and choked him to death.”

The talk became more serious when Mr Reedy said, “Attention is the active direction of the mind. But it is not constant like the ticking of a watch. It comes and goes in waves. One admires the painting on a wall and at the same time the cashmere rug on the floor and the design on a tapestry hanging over a mantle. All these things attract attention to varying degrees. Then, something else edges in and swings one around in his swivel chair, as it has swung me around many times to listen to some of the assorted nuts who wander into my editorial sanctum.”

Next, Mr Reedy recalled the first news story he wrote that attracted widespread attention. He was then was a reporter on the old Missouri Republican that years later was renamed the St. Louis Republic and in 1919 was merged with the Globe-Democrat. The news story had to do with a murderer, a morphine addict, who killed his wife and cut off a cat's head, my husband said.

“The day following publication of the story, the editor of the Republican summoned me to his office and roared, “You the man who wrote this story?” as he pointed to it in the paper. “Yes,” I replied.

“Well, that's the most interesting piece of news I've read in many moons. I'm going to raise your salary - here is twenty dollars.”

“I sped to the nearest saloon, laid the money on the bar, bought all the boys a lot of drinks, not overlooking myself on every round, and staggered homeward. I was clutching the lamp post in front of our home when my father happened along. He halted and exclaimed, “What, oh what be ye doing, Willy? Trying to hold up that old pole?”

“Naw, I’m defying public sentiment.”

“Well, ‘tis a sight ye air, innyway. Tis enough mud on yure shoes to planth pertatoes.”

Mr. Strauss having snapped, without satisfactory results, all the gadgets in his studio, no more bottles emerged. The fountains of gin and wine had run dry. The social features of the afternoon were over.

Episodes I have related happened years and years ago. I thought I was in the company of immortals, if such there be. Sadly, I recall that only one of the men who gathered that day in the studio is alive - Mitchell Kennerly. All the others have gone to that from whence no traveler returns. May flowers multiply and bloom eternally about their graves where they lie in everlasting peace!

Patience Worth

I now shall digress from my husband's description of and comments on the phenomenal and occult Patience Worth to record my own recollections of an evening spent with editor Reedy and others at the John Curran home in an exclusive and fashionable section of Lindell Boulevard, St. Louis. How well I recall that evening and other incidents pertaining to Patience Worth! Material used in this chapter has been gleaned from files of Reedy's Mirror as well as from my own fund of recollections. In reading some of Mr. Reedy's masterful prose, I have been reminded with sorrow of his passing from this Mortal scene. Other recollections came to me like an aroma in June from the fields adjacent to Clonmel, our country home he loved so dearly. Frequently, I asked myself, could the soul of William Marion Reedy visit the earth? Yes, according to Patience Worth, as reflected through Mrs. Curran, his soul could. But back again to that memorable evening at the Curran home.

The hostess was anything but eerie as she gracefully worried about the drawing room to make each guest comfortable and content. She was becomingly but ostentatiously gowned, and lavishly ornate in repartee. As I looked at Mrs. Curran, I wondered why fate had chosen her, by way of the Ouija board, to transmit messages from the Great Beyond. She was aware of my curiosity concerning the readings, and invited me to sit with her at the planchette. As she placed the board in my lap, I put my hands on the small pointer. Alas, it would not move a fraction of an inch while I was touching the gadget! Presently, Mrs. Curran seated herself and both of us put the tips of our fingers on the pointer. Eureka! Like a bolt from the blue it rocked back and forth, then spun like a top, stopping in a manner akin to a divvil on sticks, but a moment later it shook violently as if beset with delirium tremens. Was I frightened? I'll say I was! I had a vision of ghostly graveyards and leaped from my chair, the board with the tiny pointer being catapulted into the center of the drawing room.

My husband, the “Fat-Awide” as Patience Worth characterized him, stooped to gather up the Ouija board. The effort, because of his prodigious physical proportions, evoked peals of laughter but a few seconds later he lifted the mechanism with such ease and grace the merriment subsided as quickly as it began. With facial expressions and gestures of solemnity mingled with

witty remarks, Mr. Reedy replaced the board in my lap and the merriment of onlookers was renewed. Again I placed the tips of my fingers on one side of the small pointer, Mrs. Curran simultaneously doing likewise on the other side. Presto! The pointer spun like a coin twirled on a table, pouring forth a welter of words. Antics of the planchette reminded me of Thessaline witchery. Then, to my amazement, and dire discomfiture, Patience pattered on, “Tis a grand dame ye are, tis in fair taste the garb ye wear but for the drawers.”

Crimson-faced, I cried back in horror: “Oh, Patience, I clad myself tonight in no such disarranged undergarment!”

To accentuate my embarrassment, the laughter from the audience was repeated and in greater volume.

The ever considerate Billy Reedy did not mention this phase of affairs in his article in The Mirror.

I next noted with fascination the pointer twirling with such rapidity my eyes could not determine the words spelled out. It spun on and on until I was convinced there was no fraud in the invisible propeller, no contrivance through previous thoughts, no impish plot on the part of Mrs. Curran. She sat as calmly as a cradled babe in slumber, yet the medium was revealing to us a miracle of sorts in her transmission of messages from Patience Worth. To me, the unlocking of the mystical phrases seemed, at times, similar to the solution of a jigsaw puzzle. Other times, I marveled at what appeared to be a strange power conferred upon Mrs. Curran as she followed the letters the pointer indicated. All these letters, when arranged as indicated, formed sentences that seemed to emanate from the long, long ago, some of them being bits from the Bible. Was Patience, whose messages were conveyed to us via our hostess, supernatural, an elf, an angel, a divvil on sticks? Was I listening to an inhabitant of another planet or even one living eternally in heaven? I did not know, of course, exactly the location of her abode but I was convinced it was not on this earth and the transmissions were devoid of any mundane trickery.

As I sat meditating, I heard my husband's voice - a voice like music when he spoke - a peal of laughter when he told a joke. He was quoting, at random: “Tis the sunset of life that gives me mystical lore. Every word casts its shadow before.”

“Aye, God moves in a mystical way his wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.”

The next day, I bought a magical Ouija board and for weeks, several times daily, I strove to make it transmit messages to me. Alas, I was sorely disappointed! I could continue writing what would constitute several more printed pages having to do with Patience Worth, but to me it seems this chapter I am concluding, coupled with data on the mystical woman contained in other pages, is sufficient.

The Turkey Carving

Once more, Billy Reedy resumed his carving that was to soon be converted into a catastrophe.

“According to the culinary Hoyle, the wings and legs of a turkey must be clipped off first,” he said, trying to push the fork through the fowl’s seemingly adamant bones. “Gosh, this bird is tough. Trying to carve it is akin to peeling marble with a safety razor! It comes off in splinters. This veteran must be a gobbler, hatched somewhere BM.”

“What do you mean by BM, Billy?” I asked.

“Oh, Before Methuselah,” he replied and frowned at my ignorance. Following another pause, the Intrepid Carver resumed his discussion of turkeys in general.

“The finest fowls of this kind were developed in New England and turkey eggs were transported in covered wagons to the Middle West by the pioneers. This long-legged bird can run like a Missouri hound dog and fly as fleetly as a pigeon.”

As Billy was about to launch into another mingling of fact with fiction, he attempted to gesture with his hand that was holding the carving fork, cradle deep in the turkey's innards. The inanimate bird quavered a moment, leapt skyward and took a nosedive from the table to the floor. I leapt from my chair in mortification and anger. I was about to summon the maid.

I screamed, “Billy, you're getting grease all over your face and hands!”

Instead of wincing, he calmly backed into a servant and directed her to bring in the wash tub and all the towels in the house. After a momentary pause he added, “Alice, if these measures don't suffice, then turn in a call for all the policemen and firemen and the county.”

Serenity having come about for the nuns, Billy turned to Mr. Nolte and asked, “What part of the turkey shall I serve you, Louie? How about that choice morsel, the pope’s nose?

Mr. Nolte was so convulsed with laughter he did not reply and as I write this, I do not recall what piece of the fowl he did receive.

The incident of this turkey dinner I have described, occurred long ago. So many years passed that I prefer not enumerating them.

The mention of years brings to my mind that the editor, Mrs. Jetty Rutledge Bogey, of Slant, a St Louis literary publication, commented in 1946 that I then was 72 years old. I cannot conceive who could be so heartless as thus to libel me. Anyway, I know I haven't had a birthday since I was fair, fat and 40. If my face has changed, I'm vain enough to believe my mind remains youthful and clear. Even physically, I might look the same as I did decades ago had not a calamity overtaken me. I lost my store teeth not long since. If you cannot realize my predicament, I'll attempt to describe how I appeared for several days. The absence of molars so twisted a portion of my face as to indicate the appearance of a barrel of cucumbers in the process of being merged with gallons of vinegar.

Although the turkey dinner episode was ludicrous, my recollection of subsequent incidents is tinged with sadness, for I cannot but recall that William Marion Reedy, then at the zenith of his brilliancy as a writer, lecture, toastmaster and after dinner speaker, was destined soon to quit this mortal sphere, his pen and voice having been stilled, as I write this, more than 27 years. (1947).

I Kidnap My Own Husband

Billy Reedy had been in ill health for several years. In 1919, he suffered a brain hemorrhage and was taken to Jewish Hospital where doctors were unable to save his left eye. Several different versions of this story were found in Margaret's notes.

In this narrative, I shall chronicle one of my own thrilling experiences: how I kidnapped my husband from the Jewish Hospital. I did not take him out of the hospital under planned, overstepped, conventional rules. I did it because they gave him cold oatmeal for breakfast.

Early one morning, I went to the hospital. The very atmosphere about Billy that day seemed to proclaim the highest divinity and made me think of pictures I had seen in churches and cathedrals. He was always so gentle and unassuming. But one never knew when he would burst out with his fresh wit.

What did I find but that cold oatmeal was being served to Billy Reedy. Horrors! I exclaimed in amazement and disgust for my husband was a gourmet who demanded not only warm food among certain edibles but also insisted upon the best quality of everything served at his meals. A few weeks earlier. The doctor had told me Billy's frail health would not permit him to partake of all kinds of food. So I had taken it upon myself at our country home to concoct and personally prepare each dish served to my husband. Never, did I, or allow Alice, our maid, to spare him anything cold that should be served hot - especially oatmeal. And I always served whipped cream with it.

So it was, then, I made up my mind to take him home secretly.

So, I set to gathering his books, magazines, papers, letters (and believe me there were plenty of them) fruit, flowers, and even candy. When nurses and interns chanced to be out of the hospital room, my chauffeur Gene and I hastily dressed Billy in preparation for flight.

Watching Gene, our chauffeur, with one eye, looking with the other eye at the Divine Billy, he did not look badly. His cheeks were a bit sunken and the wrinkles a bit deeper in the lines of his face so nobly shaped. A few wrinkles faintly hinted themselves about his mouth, which firmly cut the beauty of his perfectly carved lips and determined chin, And, there was that impelling smile, that won for him so many friends. His eyebrows were black, heavy and arched.

Age had not yet sprinkled them with gray cinders but gave a lift to his lustrous, sparkling, jet black eyes. So penetrating. So commanding. Sometimes a laugh in them and then, a sadness that would make your heart ache. His forehead was high, broad. And the softest, silkiest curl that ever you saw, would fall over his forehead with such presence while he brushed it back with his little hands. No, not effeminate hands, but strong, white hands as though chiseled out of marble. His voice was like music and it would ring out like a clarion and his clear cut vowels and consonants of phrases would fill me with shame because of my bourgeoisie trained voice. But that was not my fault, was it?

He brushed the curl back and rubbed his hand over his face and blurted out, “This crop on my chin is stiff enough to make a broom. I’ll get shaved if I don't roost here tonight!”

“Roost?” repeated Gene who adored him.

“Yes, if I get out of here alive, I will first drive to the park. And I'll roost in one of the branches of the trees like a bird,” said Billy.

“Well, sir,” said Gene, who had a smattering of wit too, “you'd be the finest bird ever perched on the limb of a tree in Forest Park!”

“Yes, that's what you say. But I am not out of here yet if I can't walk,” said Billy.

Gene laughed. I laughed too but I was frightened to death in fear someone would come to his room before we got him out. I knew all the doctors and interns never passed the sainted Billy's door without dropping in to visit him. They all loved him.

Strange to say I got away with it! Exactly how we got him to our automobile I do not recall, but how well do I remember other incidents of that day! Little did I know the depth of despair I was about to fall into - the suffering that would follow, the bitter tears I was to shed, and, oh, the gossip that was to scorch me! But, tell me, who of us escapes the well-flavored dish of scandal? Fate, like in everything I ever did, measured and chiseled me down to nothing. We all think we are right. Then, suddenly, we realize we may be doing wrong. May God help one now if I am doing anything wrong by taking my husband home.

He did not seem so very ill that day, seating himself comfortably in the automobile without much of an effort. We got away all right and would be home shortly!

“Oh no,” said Billy, “We are going to the park! Gene, drive to the park! I want to breathe the fresh air from every part of it!’

And now we are sitting in the park in a shady place under the trees, sniffing the mild, sweet air laden with the fragrance from the flowers that the park exhales. I was holding a little prayer book. Billy took it out of my hand and said, “This little prayer book, and the Bible too, must be divinely authentic. Holy writ tells us that when Christ was taken from the cross, after they crucified him, put him in a stone sepulcher, yet, he came back, a living creature on this earth, the third day after. So, there must be a God, a heaven. Heaven must be a beautiful place to live,” he said, “ but this planet is good enough for me. I want to stay here as long as God will allow.” He paused and then said, “It is a fine old world. But I do not believe that any man or woman should have a monopoly on anything of the earth. Such a monopoly is sinful. Anyway, what benefit? We die and leave it. When I die, I'll die like the weeds.” He pointed at the grasses. “See how humbly they put forth their foliage? How humbly they die?”

Oh how he talked that day! Could I but remember even half of it! He thinks death is an ecstasy of nothing, signifies nothing, except what the ear can hear, the eye can see.

“Beauty, truth, love - when all fragrance are put together in one great conclusion, there is but one road to travel - that’s death. That's death,” he said whimsically.

There was something so sad in the way he said it. Now, as I reminisce, I wonder if he realized his time was limited on this earth. How sad, how very sad to think the immortal Billy had to die at the early age of 58.

Suddenly he became silent, with that restless movement that could stab my heart, for I knew that he was suffering. His head dropped and his face became so pale it frightened me to death. I screamed to Gene, “Get him to the car and drive fast, Gene, drive fast! Mr. Reedy…”

I did not finish the sentence. The police stopped us.

“Is there an issue with Billy?” he asked.

“Yes!” I said, “and he is very ill!”

“Drive on.” he said. “We won't disturb you.”

We reached home in a jiffy. I might say, the time required for the wild motor dash was nothing, flat. When we got home, scarcely had we tucked him under the cover, when the phone giggled madly.

"At last!"

The voice at the other end of it evinced wrath. It was the voice of Dr. Selig.

Dr. M. G. Selig was a general practitioner of statewide celebrity at the time of this incident but in the years following, he has become nationally noted for his research into the cause and treatment of cancer. My husband often referred to Dr. Selig in Reedy's Mirror. "The little doctor", as Billy often called him, had the deepest personal regard and admiration for the literary genius of William Marion Reedy. Consequently it was the natural procedure for me to summon Dr. Selig whenever my husband experienced illness, as he did frequently in his last years. "The little doctor" invariably would hasten to our home no matter whether the hour be early in the morning or late at night, or whether the air be balmy or blizzard-like. Then would ensue questioning of the patient and another physical examination, and Billy would be hurried to a hospital.

Dr. Selig said, "So. You took Billy out of the hospital without our consent, didn't you? Kidnapped him. Spirited him away, sick as he is, in defiance of the rules of the hospital!"

I listened in mute horror as he went on.

"Remember this. If anything happens to Billy Reedy, the hospital or myself, won't be responsible. Do you hear?"

"Yes, yes!" I said.

I cannot describe the education of mind I felt. In my confusion, I said, "Doctor, I did not know I was doing anything wrong, contrary to the rules of the hospital."

(I did, but I wasn't going to tell him that .)

"Well, I am telling you Billy is a sick man.Yes. Gravely ill. And requires a watchful attention and, above all, his medicine three times a day, and promptly, too! He needs food, delicately prepared, plenty of sunshine. (That was easy. We had a sun parlor) and two hot packs a day, one in the morning, and one in the evening. And each blanket must be washed after each pack."

Good God! How, oh how can I ever do that? The thought sent relentless chills down my spine. By this time, I was drenched in perspiration. I had an old fashioned ringer, but I did not have a washing machine. At that time, thirty years ago, they were expensive.

I peeked in the sainted Billy's room. He was sleeping, peacefully tired, so tired, after his visit to the park. I trembled in fear that we had stayed in the park too long. But there was another poignant fear that heightened my suffering. Those words kept ringing in my ears.

“If anything happens to Billy Reedy, we won't be responsible!”

That meant, if he dies, they would say I killed him. Oh, how horrible! How more than horrible! The terror of the thought! May the good Lord help me!

I was filled with remorse, grief and fright. Fright, because of taking him out of the hospital - sneaking him out. Why, oh why, did I do it?

Why? Because they gave him cold oatmeal. And, yes, because of my ignorance and my selfish desire to have him home with me. And my love for him, too. The vulnerable spot in a woman.

“A debt of goodness and love bears no disgrace,” is an old adage. Though in everybody's eyes, I had disgraced myself. I knew my faults were hundreds, thousands - I'll stone for them. I will. These were my thoughts.

By this time, the tears were flowing down my cheeks. The deluge brought Alice to me. I threw my arms around her neck. Colored? That did not make any difference in my grief.

“Alice, what shall I do? What shall I do?

“Buy a washing machine. That's it,” said Alice, “that’s the remedy.”

I sobbed and laughed at the same time. I had found a way.

“Call Gene, Alice. Tell him to put all the rope in the machine he can find!”

“Going to hang yourself?” laughed Alice.

And away we drove.

I found that when I put on my dress, I did not take the time to button the back of it. At that time, in the gay nineties, dresses were buttoned in the back. Yes, and I put it on inside out! Oh dear. Why didn't Alice tell me?

The clerks were laughing for my dress was open in the back and on inside out. But, what did that matter? I had found a way out of my difficulties, hadn't I? The washing machine cost $250. We fastened it on to the back of the machine with the rope.

And now, I said, “Fly, Gene, fly! Cops are no cops!”

We did and we were almost arrested again. But the officer was a nice man. I have forgotten his name.

I said, “My husband is so ill, Officer. Not expected to live. In fact dying,” I lied, but a lie is a good thing now and then. “We must be home within the hour.”

“Who’s your husband,” he asked. I told him.

“Billy Reedy. Oh? I heard he was sick. Just many a favor he did for me. Hope nothing happens to that good man. Drive on.”

And now we were home safely and I am hustling about the house with noiseless steps, preparing for the hot packs. When Billy saw the blankets piled high to the ceiling, he began to laugh.

“You have blankets enough for Captain Lord Nelson's soldiers in his Battle of the Nile!”

“Yes and I'll need every one of them. The doctor says I must wrap you in blankets until the sweat pours down on the floor.”

“Is it necessary to give this pack today?” he said in alarm.

“Oh, yes, the doctor's orders, isn't it Alice?

Why did he ask that question? Was he afraid I would blister his tender flesh? But how patient he was. He permitted his hot packs to be given with the most extraordinary inexhaustible patience. And a hail storm of jokes and anecdotes that ever fell from a man's tongue teamed with a dissertation of his last pack. While Alice and Gene watched the clock, fifteen minutes he had to broil in those hot packs. When I was removing the blankets, putting on his woolen robe, Gene rolled in the winged chair I had bought on the sly. His face beamed, eyes staring.

“What's this? What's this?

And before we realized it, he was sitting comfortably in that chair, Wheeling himself over to the sun parlor, smiling and happy. I had arranged everything for his comfort - a telephone at his elbow so he could call his friends and ring his office at his leisure.

The second day after I kidnapped the editor of Reedy's Mirror, Dr. Selig came to see him.

“Why Billy, you have improved. Yes, improved very much,” the physician said in a tone that evinced surprise. “The truth is, you are getting along splendidly. Margaret undoubtedly has been taking splendid care of you.”

Dr. Selig's statement afforded me much joy. I flattered myself I had saved my husband's life.

The routine continued for twelve days, during which time I was virtually sleepless. In truth, the duration to me seemed to have been 100 days, for there kept ringing in my ears Dr. Selig’s pronouncements: If anything happens to Billy, we won't be responsible.

The days passed quickly and with each day, my beloved husband improved. Now he was walking on the lawn filled with rapture and delight. He was going to his office tomorrow.

“What, beefsteak you want? Yes? And some cool beer with it? But the doctor said I should give you beef broth, chicken broth and fresh things, didn't he Alice?”

“Well, I have been home ten days,” he said.

“That’s not so long,” I said, “and I don't think you should eat steak or go to your office tomorrow either.”

“Well, I'm hungry and I want beef steak and onions for dinner.”

“All right,” I said with the prospective he would not eat it. But I could refuse him nothing. So, I told the cook to prepare a steak. While I was busy around the house, he told Alice to serve the dinner.

“I am so hungry, I could eat tacks! Tacks, sir! Yes, even peach stones!” he said.

She served the dinner and when I sat down to eat my dinner - no steak on the table.

“Serve the steak, Alice!”

“I did.”

“What became of it?”

“I ate it all,” said Billy with a chuckle.

“What? You ate all of that large steak?”

“Sure, and I could eat another.”

I began to cry and left the table. If the doctor ever found out I gave him that kind of food, more trouble for me.

I never told the doctor about the steak. for the very next morning Billy had a relapse. I heard him groaning and flew into his room. A severe attack of chills seized him. His face was purple and his eyeball strained to the bursting point. His heavy breathing was broken by tremulous groans.

I quickly opened the windows and bathed his face with cold water, calling Alice.

"Hurry!" I said, "Send for Dr. Selig.

"Now, see what you have done!" Said Dr. Selig.

"Yes, yes doctor, all my own doings," I sobbed. "Tell me, is he very ill? Is there any danger?"

A look of stern rebuke was the reply. I began to weep, but my sobs had no weight with the doctor and there was no explanation, no alibi. I did not dare tell him about the steak. I went to my room, got down on my knees and prayed. Oh, how I prayed and asked God to spare him. Let him live! Please, please, oh God! I was a wreck. No wonder, the way the doctor stared at me.

He came out of my dear Billy's room and jerked on his hat. Just then a sound of pain came from Billy's room. The doctor flew to him as though on wings and I was struck down with terror, fear. In my abortive struggle to reach his room, I fell flat on the floor. I thought he was dying. Presently, the doctor appeared. He snatched his medicine case, rummaged through it, and filled his hands with some small bottles. He slapped instructions on them.

"Now, take this, and this, and this," he said. I told him I would read the instructions thoroughly and obey them.

He jerked his hat on the side of his head, grabbed his medicine case and pulled the door open so abruptly the handle fell off. He picked it up and put it back on and walked out leaving me full of chagrin and remorse and misery.

And then gossip, the heirloom of the ages, spread itself like wildfire…

> "She took home! Actually kidnapped him from the hospital when he was unconscious!
>
> "Broke the rules of the hospital, disobeyed the doctor's orders, and then after she

brought him home, didn't feed him the proper food, or give him his medicine either!"

"Now he is dying, that fine man. Oh, ain't that awful, said one farm woman. "She ought to be arrested!"

These stories stood me open to criticism in all its poignance. I felt the ineffable scorn and withering contempt showered upon me.

Here, let me make a passing remark. How do we so often hold light the trivial things in life and then, some people enlarge it lies and more lies? I shall pass over this portion of my story which, though not marked by any painful feature of calamity, yet was perhaps the most painful experience I ever had. But life has presented so many vicissitudes so the tirade of gossip did not worry me.

The next morning I overslept. Never opened my eyes until noon. My first thought: Alice, why did you let me sleep so late? How is he?

I looked on the lawn. There he sat in his winged chair, reading the morning paper. Oh, kind Valence of Justice! He is better!

I ran out in my bare feet, put my arms around him and kissed him. I worshiped him.

The Shave

Another problem confronted me. It was impossible to induce a barber to come to our country home to shave Billy. It was ten miles to the country. So I took over the task. What a botch I made of my maiden effort as a tonsorial artist!

“I am going to shave you,” I told Billy.

“Quite agreeable to me,” said Billy. “save for my neck.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“You'll cut me throat…my head off.” he said.

“Oh, Billy, don't talk so silly. I can shave and it won't be much of an effort, either, with a profusion of lather and a sharp knife that will cut steel,” I flung back at him.

He went a little pale at the joke.

“Oh, I mean a sharp razor will do the trick,” I said. “I’ll prune…I mean, shave you. Make you look like a young Bacchus. Here's the hand Mirror. Look at yourself.”

“Be jabbers! I look liken a barnyard rooster! How those hairs push themselves through is a mystery to me. Why there are a myriad of them! The output of hair that spreads from the inner part of my nose and the bristles on my cheeks are so profuse and of such a superior quality, reminds me of a Barbary ape,” he said.

“Well, let me clear your face,” I said, holding the cloth upside down, as an invitation. I wasn't afraid to tackle the job. I always did have a hankering for hairdressing, inherited from bourgeoisie ancestors I suppose. But Billy looked and acted as though afraid of me while I was pressing the point. Thinking to myself, I cannot persuade him, suddenly he put the shaving cloth around his neck. Then I took the brush, stirred it in the lather, slapped it on Billy's face, and it splashed all over the room, in his mouth, nose and eyes.

“Stop!” he cried, “You’re blinding me!”

I stopped, wiped the lather from his eyes and lathered his face again.

“Now, where is the razor?”, I said.

“I swallowed it. All but the handle,” he said.

We both roared at that remark.

“Tell me, where is it?”, I asked.

“In my stomach and I don't know whether it is an asset or a liability. but it is ze “Coute Que Coute,” he said.

I did not know what those phrases meant, but I knew it was a Reductio Ad Absurdum, which in Latin is something ridiculous. And now he is sitting up in his chair straight as a broom handle while I am looking for the razor which I found on the floor. I was becoming more serious, more determined, too. I pushed him back in the chair.

“Now,” he said, pressing his arms deep in the chair, “Here's where I get murdered.”

I knew he was only ridiculing me, which was so characteristic of him, with his Irish banter.

“Just hold your head back and look up. Up!” I said.

“Yes, and make myself believe that Gabriel and his angels are blowing a trumpet from the ceiling while you expose me to the liberal art of your razor that demands perfection on all men's chins,” he said.

I said, “Billy, if you don't sit still and hold your head back I won't be able to shave you.”

He complied.

“A little further back,” I said. “That’s it.”

“Faith, you are holding my head too far back, and using my nose for a handle!” he said.

“Wait, wait for a minute. Now, I finished. I am going to trim your hair,” I said.

“Oh, no, you are not! I am studying entomology. You have such an adept way of using the comb. I am afraid you'll disturb the vermicular, omnivorous, voracious little loungers that invade the head promiscuously, like a soldier,” he clowned.

But the victim never complained thereafter, at least when I was within what he thought was earshot. However, from the next room the following day I heard him say in a low voice to the physician, “Dr. Selig, after Margaret got through shaving me, I looked and felt like a combination of the last rows of summer and the wreck of the Hesperus. She has done magnificently as a nurse but, hell's bells! I wish you'd advise her to get a butcher the next time she feels I need a shave. A butcher at least can do his carving with neatness and speed!”

The Visit to Edwin Lemp's Home - Cragwold

And now the Divine Billy is ready for a trip to Cragwold, Edwin Lemp's country home.

We drove for miles and scarcely had we rounded one turn when a vista of miles would stretch away before us that seemed twice as long. Again, the woods, the rich verdure, the valleys, woven to warp and woof, and woody, climbing plants created by the God of the universe made the drive so pleasant. I know Billy enjoyed every minute of it.

Finally we reached the entrance of Edwin's house. The driveway wound around like a garter and was a smooth as glass covered with tile and turf. The edge of it was well-weeded with such care and given to the growth of lovely flowers, smiling, nodding and blooming in the breeze. Suddenly, we reached the highest point of the hill with a commanding view of the far beyond.

"Stop, Gene," said Billy, "and let us inhale the aroma of the wildflowers from the beds of the distant hills. Good God, what a view! A scene from Ruskin…Wadsworth! Edwin had an eye for beauty when he selected this place," he continued. "Reminds me of the stories of The Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve lived so happily!"

"Oh, but Adam debauched Eve, seduced her," I said.

"Well now, do you give a man so low a standard of female fidelity as that?" said Billy. "Adam only stole Eve's apple."

"Yes, I do," I said. "Woman needs a Hes… Hes…" I hesitated in my plebeian ignorance. I couldn't finish the sentence.

Billy was quick. "Oh, you mean Hesperus in Greek mythology, who guarded the golden apple garden and Hera protecting their marriage from Zeus?" Then he said, "Look there's a peacock strutting proudly on the lawn. Drive on, Gene, or I'll steal it."

And now we have reached Edwin's palatial home, surrounded by shrubs and rocks, entwined with viticultured vines. Oh, what a work of nature and art hidden by the high cliffs! And all trees with feathered beauties in gorgeous robes, fanned together with rival songsters that made the morning vocal in a concert from the top of the trees, touching Edwin's window to awaken him in the summer's golden sunrise.

Edwin was slender to a fault, small boned. Most observers would say he was a very little man, which is far from true, for he touches middle height. His eye meets men's chins. His eyebrows were arched and he had kindly eyes of blue, blue as the sky with a mischievous look in them. The Chronicles say he was a spoiled child because he was the youngest in the family.

The butler answered the door but Edwin appeared from nowhere and greeted us with chivalry and courtliness in his manner as he took Billy's arm and led him to a chair. The room was gorgeous. Japanese vases in white, gold and blue, filled with flowers - flowers everywhere! On little mahogany tables, on little tabarets, and feathery fronds of leaves. Beautiful hand-carved ottomans that invited one to the recesses of the windows shaded by the massive trees. The fireplace would make any connoisseur stare. It was so beautiful. Above it, designs of art of an earlier date. Massive mirrors and quaint, massive chairs far beyond the modern chair of today, with the Lemp coat of arms on them. And on tall pedestals were bronze busts, perhaps Edwin's ancestors.

What a host was Edwin! He left nothing undone to make one comfortable and his unbounded solicitude as to Billy's comfort proved the gentleman that he was.

“I hear you have become quite an agriculturist, Edwin,” said Billy.

“Yes, I have said,” said Edwin with a funny twinkle in his eyes. “I have hauled wheelbarrow and wheelbarrow of manure to fertilize the fields and then plowed under.”

“Ho, ho!” said Billy, “What else did you do? Milk the cows? Clean the henhouse? Ever get any chicken lice on yourself?” asked Billy with a chuckle. “The last time, I was covered with ‘em.”

They both laughed.

Edwin admitted, “A few. Yes, I do my own milking and my own carpentry work. See that little Jake house out there? I built that and it is a chef-d’oeuvre, because it is odorous.”

They both roared. Yes, they were having a lot of fun that day so long ago. I wonder if Edwin recalls it.

The sun shone through the window and fell in patches on Billy's face, making him look pale, and the vigilant and alert Edwin immediately noticed it. He said, “Do you feel badly, Billy? Will you have a glass of wine, or would you prefer a highball?”

Billy said, “Yes, I think a highball would brace me up a bit.”

Edwin said, “Will Old Taylor do?”

“Do what?” said Billy. “Do you mean old man Taylor of the aristocratic family?”

“This.” said Edwin, putting a bottle of Old Taylor on the table.

“Oh,” said the immortal Billy, with an air of amusement at Edwin's keen sense of humor., “That Taylor is of Herculean strength. It would wreck the Dutch Embassy in Dresden.”

When no one was looking, I filled a goblet to the brim and drank it in one gulp. When it was time to go home, they found me under the table.

And now we are home and as he sits on the lawn in his winged chair, listening to the birds, piping sweet, strange notes full of the joy of spring.

The Death of William Marion Reedy

William Marion Reedy was in San Francisco covering the Democratic National Convention. He had also made time to visit friends in Hollywood and went on a tuna fishing expedition. He sent regular updates to his assistants so they could be published in *The Mirror*. By all accounts, he was his usual affable, witty self. Unfortunately, he suffered a massive heart attack or stroke and died on July 28, 1920. His body was brought back to St. Louis and lay in state at Clonmel followed by a funeral service at St. Louis University's Law School. According to newspaper accounts, over 1000 people attended He was buried at Calvary Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.

Margaret's Final Words About William Marion Reedy

As for the years of our marriage, I can truthfully state that they were the happiest of my life. Mr. Reedy's kindly attitude toward me throughout those years should be proof of my own fidelity. He ignored every slight or slur directed at me because of my unfortunate earlier life, a period of time I earnestly wish I had never experienced.

In almost every instance when I was frowned upon socially, women were those who remained aloof from me. Fortunately, there were exceptions to this attitude, and I derive much comfort from the fact that certain members of my own sex have been most gracious to me as is attested by incidents which I have related elsewhere in this chronicle, Mr. Reedy's masculine friends did not, either by word or deed, ever humiliate me.

My husband sought in every way to make my life pleasant. He never failed to accompany me to notable lectures, concerts and dramatic performances. He was considerate in everything having to do with or home life.

Others are far more gifted than I to adequately portray his kindly character. Therefore. I am closing this record with a tribute by Babette Deutsch which appeared in the current poetry department of the Literary Digest soon after Mr. Reedy's death:

The ones who know you, living May believe
you cold, so sheeted in indifference.
There is a mask the dead May wear to deceive,
and against this you taught them no defense.
chilled by a hand whose answering warmth is gone,
they grieve The Gleam quenched under great lids.
they hide the face they never knew so wan,
Whose final silence frightens and forbids.
but some who never saw you see you best,
some you could never meet will hail you yet,
loving the generous faults with all the rest,
quick to forgive, and glad not to forget;

still tingling with a kindling influence
of mellow gifts, Immortal and immense.

Little, if anything, could I add to this generous tribute nor to the other laudatory sentiments expressed at the time William Marion Reedy died. Men and women of letters knew that he occupied a notable niche in the literary world and that his ideas will live on.

Epilogue

Mr. Reedy had bequeathed his publication to Margaret.[1] Many people wondered what would become of it. Would she sell it? Would she find a way to continue to publish it? Close friends of Mr. Reedy understood that, for him, *The Mirror* was much more a job and he was much more than its proprietor and editor. Could there be a *Mirror* without Reedy? In August, the questions were answered when it was announced that there would be one last issue of *Reedy's Mirror*. In an article titled "Adios", Margaret said, quite simply, that she preferred not to continue publication. [2] . There were rumors that she sold the magazine, but no further issues were published.

In the coming years, a peaceful life was not in the cards for Margaret. In December 1920, the St. Louis Star reported that her home at Clonmel had been robbed. At the time, Margaret was visiting a friend in the city. According to the article, a neighbor reported to her that some men were removing furniture and other items from the house. The sheriff was called but the men escaped. The loss of her belongings was estimated to be worth $4000.[3]

To make ends meet, Margaret tried operating a tea room out of a building on the Clonmel property. Her advertisement in the newspaper proclaimed:

Mrs. Reedy's Tea Room.

Will Open Saturday.

At CLONMEL,

Home of the late William Marion Reedy, Manchester and Berry Roads.

Finest cooking in St. Louis County.[4]

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[1] "Reedy's Will Bequeaths Entire Estate to Widow", *The St. Louis Star Times,* August 6, 1920

[2] "Farewell Announcement Says Mrs. Reedy Prefers Not to Continue Publication", *Moberly Democrat,* August 29, 1920

[3] "Reedy Home in the County Looted of Furnishings", *St. Louis Star,* December 8, 1920

[4] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* May 5, 1921

But trouble continued to follow Margaret and the newspapers were only too happy to report it. Soon after she opened her tearoom, a young lawyer named Henry Rowe came in and demanded to be served alcohol. When he was told that only soft drinks were served, he started smashing dishes and glassware and "chased Mrs. Reedy about the place with a hatchet and that after breaking the chandelier he had tried to cut her with a piece of the broken glass."[5] The sheriff arrested Rowe but, once in court, Margaret declined to press charges. Rowe was arrested a second time for a similar incident at the tea room in which he damaged some furniture, but again, Margaret declined to press charges.

The following years brought more drama into Margaret's life. In early 1922, she married a man named Martin P. Haney but within months, would tell people that she preferred to ignore the marriage and desired to be known as Mrs. Margaret Reedy. Later that year, she reported the theft of a $3000 diamond ring set. Then, in July, a fire destroyed the bungalow that she and Reedy had built after the first fire. The building was a total loss and damages came to more than $15,000. Tragically, fully one-half of the original manuscripts of William Marion Reedy had been destroyed in the fire. Margaret said that she was not injured because she was living in a space above the tearoom instead of in the main house.[6]

It soon became apparent that Margaret was indeed deriving income from the sale of liquor at her tearoom. Federal prohibition agents raided her property and confiscated champagne, whisky, wine and home-brew beer. She denied that the liquor was for sale, stating that what they had found was her private stock. In October, her attorney pleading for leniency stating that Margaret had financial trouble following the death of her husband. The judge failed to see her circumstance as cause for her to violate the lawl and the following April, she was under orders to dispense non-alcoholic beverages.[7]

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[5] "Henry Rowe Arrested On Complaint Of Mrs. Reedy", *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* July 15, 1921

[6] "Fire Destroys Home Owned By Mrs. Reedy", *St. Louis Globe-Democrat,* July 24, 1922

[7] "26 More Liquor Defendants Fined Total of $7200", *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* October 13, 1922

At that point, Margaret appears to have given up the idea of running a teahouse and told people that she sold the business to a Mr. William Long who renamed it the "Peek Inn"8 Alternatively, she told people that she had sold it to her sister, Mrs. Claire Bordenave.9 (Author's note: No mention of a sister was made in Margeret's autobiographical notes) In any case, the teahouse became one of a number of roadhouses that operated around St. Louis County in the mid 1920's. But federal agents found liquor in a chicken coop behind the main building and Margaret was charged again with violating the Volstead Act. She tried arguing that she was no longer the proprietor but eventually, a fine of $1000 was levied against her.10

In 1936 Margaret was working for the St. Louis Relief Administration Women's Shelter. She had lost all of her inheritance from Reedy's estate and was essentially penniless.11 She began work on a memoir of her years with Reedy as a means to produce income. She said, "Billy always said I could write if I'd ever settle down to it." A friend gave her a typewriter on which she also aimed to write short stories. Her project was never completed although a short version of it appeared much later in SLANT magazine12. However, according to Max Putzel, Reedy's most well-known biographer, it was "clearly the work of a newspaper reporter" and not Mrs. Reedy. 13

Over the years, Senator Michael Kinney, long-time friend of Mr. Reedy, took an interest in Margaret's welfare. This was the Senator Kinney who succeeded his brother Senator Thomas "Snake" Kinney in the Missouri state government and went on to be the longest-serving elected official in Missouri history.[14] He was also known for his focus on creating legislation aimed at

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[8] "Corn Whisky and Home Brew Found at Roadhouse", *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 5, 1925

[9] "Mrs. Reedy Held on 4 Liquor Law Charges", *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat,* June 3, 1926

[10] "Mrs. Reedy Is Fined $1000 On 'Dry' Charge", *St. Louis Globe-Democrat,* January 13, 1927

[11] "Mrs. Marion Reedy Dead; Predicted Demise in Will", *St. Louis Star and Times,* December 27, 1949

[12] "Reedy Lives On", *SLANT,* Winter, 1945 - 1946, No. 3

[13] Putzel, Max, *The Man in the Mirror, 1963*

[14] "Do You Know: State Senator", accessed May 18, 2025 senate.mo.gov/media/SenatorFacts

helping indigent women and children. In fact, Senator Kinney often received the poor and needy in both in his office and at his home. In her autobiographical notes, Margaret reported witnessing one of these events saying that Kinney's manner was always gracious and he often gifted his visitors with sizable sums of money to help them pay for rent or food.

In 1949, Margaret was living alone in a modest three-room apartment at 1305 Chambers road and existing off of a state old-age pension. [15] Her health was poor but she was trying once again to write Mr. Reedy's biography, visiting the Mercantile Library, Historical Society and other places in an effort to recover files of *Reedy's Mirror.* She had hoped to be helped by a more experienced writer.

It was Margaret's habit to visit Senator Kinney every year on Christmas Eve. But that year, she failed to show up. Not hearing from her, Kinney grew worried. He went to her home and found she had passed away. The coroner stated that she died from natural causes. When her possessions were inventoried, it came to very little and newspapers reported that she had only $3.42 to her name.[16]After a small funeral service, she was buried in Calvary Cemetery next to her husband, William Marion Reedy.

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[15] IBID

[16] Mrs. WIlliam Reedy Found Dead in Home", *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* December 27, 1949.